INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

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DATE : 24 April 1995 Ref: AF 881

SUBJECT: ***PARKER HISTORY***

Last Summer, before Robin Wayman fell ill, he provided me with a copy of the first part of his work on the history of PARKER. I attach a copy of this for your information and retention. It seemed to me that with the D-Day and VJ Day anniversaries in the offing, some of the material might be relevant for the purpose. In any event, it is a good read and its a sad reminder of how interesting the complete work would have been.

Please let me know if there are any errors of fact that conflict with any of your own understandings. I would recommend at some point that the work is completed, say up to the Gillette acquisition, though I do not know who would do it.

David Alcock

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"MAKE SOMETHING BETTER AND THE PUBLIC WILL BUY IT"

SOME NOTES ON PARKER

GEORGE SAFFORD PARKER

In 1636 a William Parker left Dover with his wife Mary and set sail for the new world. We do not know why they decided to leave England but at this time a stream of emigrants were crossing the Atlantic either in the hope of making a better living in a new country or in protest at the religious intolerance of the High Church establishment of the day. They settled in Connecticut in New England.

Over two hundred years later George Parker's parents in the best frontiersman tradition trekked out of New England to the Mid West and George Parker himself was born at Shullsberg in Wisconsin on 1st November 1863. While he was still small his parents packed all their belongings in a covered wagon and the family drove the 69 miles to a farm near Fayette, Iowa. Here he followed the pattern of life of the farm, working long hours in the fields, and attending a local school in the winter when he could be spared from the farm.

"Life in Iowa at this time," he wrote later, "was the sort you read about in books of the early days. Wide expanses, few settlers, vast prairies, ride as you wish - hither and thither - and it was wild, very wild. The house where we lived had been built by a previous settler. Part of it was made of logs; part of it was upright boards. Well do I remember sleeping upstairs in the not-too-well constructed log part of the house and being able to look through the cracks. Many a time I would awaken in the wintertime to find a little snowdrift on my bed. This was not considered a hardship but merely a nuisance. There was no such thing as a steam-heated or water heated bathroom; in fact, I am not sure whether they had them in those days or not - but certainly not in North Western Iowa".

He successfully matriculated at Upper Iowa University and began thinking of a career. He had had his fill of the unmechanized farming of the day and his mother agreed that he was not cut out to be a farmer. He was wavering between medical training and a career on the railway. One day however, in an old magazine - "Youths' Companion" - he saw an advertisement for the Valentine School of Telegraphy at Janesville in the neighbouring state of Wisconsin. (Janesville was a small town that was first founded in the mid 1830's and was named after the original postmaster). This advertisement decided him and, having saved up $55 for fees, he enrolled at the college.

He must have been an unusual pupil - within a year he was on the staff.

"THE GOVERNMENT OF THE GOOSE QUILL"

The quill pen was the only effective writing instrument for well over a thousand years. It originated in the Dark Ages some time before 600 A.D. The composition of a quill is not unlike that of a human finger nail; it is both tough and flexible. The quill was shaped from the strong flight feathers of any large bird. Four or five such feathers could be obtained from one wing. Goose was usually chosen though later on turkey was popular because it proved to be more durable. The feather from the left wing suited a right hand best because it curved away from the writer; a feather from the right wing curved inward and might stab him in the eye. The quill feathers were plucked from the living goose early in the spring each year. The feather was first soaked until it was soft and then hardened again in hot sand. The barbs were then trimmed so that they did not tickle the knuckle. The stem itself was then shaped and slitted with a penknife. The 'nib' - that part of the quill that actually came into contact with the paper - could be pared to any thickness or to any angle to suit the preference of the scribe.

The result was a tool which was both flexible and, in a skilled hand, long lasting. It was an enormously successful instrument which dominated writing from the Dark Ages to the Industrial Revolution. The book of Kells executed about 700 A.D. through the range of medieval scripts to the legal documents of the eighteenth century all testify to the beauty of the work which the quill could produce. Charles Dickens, for example, preferred a very fine line when he wrote the manuscript of his novels. He used crow's feathers. As with any tool, however, the quill required constant skilful and fine adjustment to ensure continuous high performance.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries an immense trade built up to supply quills to an increasingly literate Europe. Vast flocks of geese were raised in Russia, Poland, Germany and Holland. In a single year for example twenty seven million quills were exported from St.Petersburg - now Leningrad - to England.

Quills had their drawbacks. The essential skills in cutting, slicing and shaping were too exacting for busy men. Thomas Hood expressed his frustrations:

"What horrid, awkward, bungling tools of trade
Appeared the writing instruments, home made!
What pens were sliced, hewed, hacked and haggled out
Slit or unslit, with many a various snout!....
To try in any common inkstand then
With all their miscellaneous stocks
To find a decent pen
Was like a dip into a lucky box -
You drew and got one very curly,
And split like endive in some hurly-burly;
The next unslit, a square at end, a spade;
The third, incipient pop-gun, not yet made;
The fourth a broom; the fifth of no avail,
Turned upwards like a rabbits tail....."

As the spirit of challenge and enquiry developed - at least in Europe - a demand built up, particularly in the eighteenth century, for a simple and durable pen for business and for school use. Inventors and manufacturers in different countries tried to develop a metal substitute for the quill. As early as 1700, for example, Roger North wrote home to his sister:

"You will hardly tell by what you see that I write with a steel pen. It is a device come out of France..... When they get the knack of making them exactly, I do not doubt but that the government of the goose quill is near an end, for none that can have them will use other."

THE STEEL NIB

But the French never got "the knack of making them exactly" in any volume that was commercially viable. No one man invented the steel nib. Invention followed on the heels of demand in several places simultaneously. A magistrate in Aix-la-Chappelle in 1748, an un-named Frenchman in 1750, a school teacher in Konigsberg in 1808 and Mr Peregrine Williamson of Boston in 1800 have all been credited with the original idea. ("The English soon borrowed this invention and realised immense fortunes"). A bronze pen has been excavated from the lava of Roman Pompeii: fifty generations passed before a viable successor was developed.

At first each nib was fashioned laboriously and often somewhat crudely by hand. The most difficult process was to make the right kind of slit. The method usually adopted was to hammer a thin strip of metal into a tube shape, so that as the outer edges came together, the slit was formed. The underside of the tube was then scooped away just like a quill and the point was filed to shape. Another technique was to punch the shape of the nib out of a flat strip of soft steel and then to round this to shape by hammering it over a circular rod of wood. The underside of the point was then marked by a sharp chisel where the slit was to be made. When the steel hardened this dent was forced to crack along its length. The end was then ground and shaped by wheel or file to create the required point.

The manufacturers of Birmingham recognised a saleable idea when they saw one and so a small industry grew up producing metal nibs in quantity for markets at home and abroad between 1800 and 1830. These handmade nibs were, of course, expensive. The price to the wholesaler was 2d each. The quill makers could still mount a credible defence of their traditional market.

The breakthrough was the invention of the screwpress - or more correctly the adaption of the screwpress from its original application in button manufacture and other trades. This machine could stamp out accurate shapes from thin strips of soft metal and could be adapted to pierce the slots, emboss a raised design and to press the nib into the rounded shape necessary to fit the pen. When the nibs had been hardened, a second press fitted with an upper and lower cutter made the final clean slit in the centre of each nib. Any roughness left by these machining operations was finally removed by 'tumbling' them for several hours in barrels with mild abrasives such as walnut shells; they were then polished in the same way with sawdust. The nibs were coloured by heating them in cylinders over coke fires until the required tint had been achieved. They were then lacquered to prevent rusting, dried and packed.

The Birmingham manufacturers grasped this opportunity. They had already established a somewhat tenuous foothold in the market with their handmade nibs. The accurate punches and dies which interlocked and pressed the flat steel into a perfect image of themselves called for a high degree of toolmaking skill - and these skills were available in Birmingham. Perhaps more important, a small entrepreneur could rent a workshop in the back streets of nineteenth century Birmingham and he would rent not only the space but the surplus power from his neighbour's steam engine.

This meant that he required significantly less initial capital than his competitors needed elsewhere. The names of the large wholesalers, such as James Perry and Joseph Gillott, became famous throughout the world. They obtained their nibs from a range of small, badly lit and insanitary workshops whose names are now lost.

By 1830, James Perry was able to announce that "till about six months' ago, the public had heard little of metallic pens. At present, it would seem that comparatively few of any kind are in the hands of any class of the community. This sudden transition may clearly be traced to the announcement of the Patent Perryian Pens in various periodicals about six months ago...." Perhaps..... By 1850 the wholesale price had dropped from 2d each to 2d a gross, box included. Thrusting Victorian salesmen travelled the world with elaborately designed and printed boxes tailored for each national market - and the country of origin shyly concealed: the Danskpost pen for Denmark, the Admiral Tojo pen for Japan and the Goorkha pen for India.

One such entrepreneur was Josiah Mason of Birmingham who sold cakes and fruit and made boots and furniture before he identified this market opportunity. It was about 1829, he wrote later, that he saw nine 'slip' pens on a card, priced 3s.6d, in a bookshop window in Bull Street. He was struck by the novelty of the product so he went into the shop to buy one so that he "could improve upon it". Initially the shopkeeper insisted that he had to buy the complete card but eventually "he consented to sell me the one he was writing with, and so I bought the 'pin' for sixpence. I returned home, and made three pens that evening". The name stamped on the nib was 'Perry, Red Lion Square, London'. Josiah Mason sent his best three nibs to London in a letter "for which I paid 9d postage - what a change now, to only a penny!" to ask whether Perry would employ him to make nibs for sale. James Perry reacted promptly - nineteeth century entrepreneurs did not waste time. This letter brought him to Birmingham the following day but one, "by eight o'clock in the morning" and "from that moment I became a steel pen maker".

Mason goes on to record how in 1831 he made pens worth £1,421 for Perry. The upsurge in demand for steel nibs made Mason's fortune. He bought his steel wire not from Birmingham but from Sheffield - one ton of steel yielded 1½ million nibs. He introduced rollers to reduce the steel to the required thickness and designed special presses which slit the nibs instead of cracking them. It was characteristic of the man and his times that Mason made the punches and dies required for the slitting process with his own hands. The Toolmaker who made the special presses was never allowed to see them actually working - so careful was Mason to protect his "secrets". In 1872 he was knighted. By 1874 he was producing 32,000 gross of steel nibs every week. Mason's nibs were not known as such. He supplied the wholesalers under their brand names.

James Gillott, on the other hand, sold under his own name which was therefore much better known to the public at large. His accounting was meticulous. In 1841, for example, he recorded that he had made 62,126,928 nibs. The two seem never to have met until both businesses were well established. At one point there was talk of partnership but they remained both firm friends and keen business rivals. Another and more famous person to offer Josiah Mason a partnership was Baron Krupp of Essen who visited Birmingham when he was trying to develop his first patent.

By the end of the nineteenth century the thirteen principal nib factories in Birmingham were using 28 tons of the finest thin steel each week and producing from it some 175 million nibs a year. The Industrial Revolution had arrived - and the quill was dead.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND

Perhaps the most dramatic way to illustrate the impact of the steel nib is to draw on the records of the Bank of England. In 1734 the Bank moved from the Grocers' Hall in Poultry to new premises in Threadneedle Street. At about that time the contract for supplying quill pens was negotiated with the firm of Walsh. There were four grades:

Best Parlour.....10s.0d per hundred
Second Parlour.....5s.0d per hundred
Seconds.....3s.6d per hundred
Common.....2s.8d per hundred

In 1822 - eighty eight years later - the Bank's Committee for the House and Servants challenged these prices. Its concern is understandable, for in 1820 the Bank spent £2,021 on a million and a quarter quills for its one thousand staff. In other words each employee used 1,250 quills a year - or rather more than four a day. The cost was equivalent to the salaries of one hundred eighteen year old clerks at £20 a year or of twenty experienced clerks at £100 a year. (In 1984 terms equivalent salary figures would be £425,000 and £156,000 respectively!). Mr Walsh grudgingly reduced his prices but the Committee forecast a saving of 50% by the adoption of new technology. The new technology in this case was the Bramah Patent Pen - a standard penholder which took a quill nib. Each quill could be cut into up to eight nibs, thus economising on what was proving to be an expensive material and obviating the messy task of recutting the nib with a penknife. Bramah, the eldest son of the inventor, quoted 4s.2d. for each penholder and 3s.0d. a hundred for the nibs. The Court of Directors decreed that the principle of open competition should be applied to the supply of pens to the Bank - Mr Walsh's cosy relationship spluttered to an end and Mr Bramah's prices dropped to 2s.8d. for the penholder and 2s.9d. for each hundred nibs. Between 1822 and 1845 the Bramah pen was in regular use in the Bank and the purchase of quills fell away sharply. In a six month period in 1826, for example, 26,450 quills were issued as opposed to 212,300 Bramah pens.

As early as 1831, however, the steel nib was introduced with a trial order worth £7.4s.0d. For the next fifteen years all three writing modes were in use though the steel nib soon became favorite. It is easy to see why. In 1810 the Bank spent £2,417 on quills: in 1846 it spent £281 on all pens - a reduction of 88% at a time when the number of staff did not increase. Such is the justification of the Industrial Revolution. The statistics of the Bank's purchases and usages tell the detailed story in Appendix I.

But the quill pen proper had a long run at the Bank. It outlived the Bramah Patent and was eclipsed by the steel nib - but a definite purchase of quills is on record as late as August 1907.

THE FOUNTAIN PEN

The mass produced steel nib required no maintenance. It could be quickly and cheaply replaced at the end of its working life. It also generated further consumer demand - this time for the design of a portable writing instrument, as the Penny Encyclopaedia of 1840 put it; "a pen made with a reservoir in its stem or holder to supply ink for some time without replenishing". In the winter of 1905 J P Maginnis gave a series of lectures to the Royal Society of Arts in which he surveyed the state of the art at that time. He defined the objectives of an effective fountain pen in terms which have not been improved upon since:

"A fountain pen, to be perfect, should fulfil certain requirements. It should be of convenient form and size, and as light as possible. Its ink carrying capacity should be as large as is consistent with its portability. It should not be too ready to empty itself, except when required to do so, and then only at a rate not exceeding the requirements of the writer. It should be prompt in delivering ink the instant the nib touches the paper. It should have as few working parts as possible, and these free from complication or liability to injury from careless handling". Today's pen designer starts from this fundamental brief.

He also defined the underlying technical problem:

"It would appear to be a very simple matter to construct a pen capable of holding a generous supply of ink..... Nothing perhaps could be more devoid of complications than, say, a glass tube of small diameter having its one end drawn out to a tapering point..... but woe betide him who thinks he is in possession of a fountain pen which he can carry in his pocket and use at will. The laws of nature will assert themselves, and it is more than probable that on the first occasion upon which the proud fashioner and possessor takes it from his pocket to show his envious friends, he will find that it has completely emptied itself of ink. Then he thinks that a cork or stopper fitted into the upper end would prevent a recurrence of such a mishap. It will, to a limited extent, but the warmth of his body - against which the tube lies - is sufficient to expand the air in the tube, and the ink is forced out through the point by this means..... When a filled pen is held downward, the ink it contains is acted on by a variety of forces, among which may be reckoned gravity, inertia, capillary attraction, air pressure, friction and the viscosity of the liquid. If the pen is properly made, these forces are in a state of equilibrium, and the ink does not run out of the reservoir. As soon, however, as the point touches the surface..... the action of the capillary attraction is altered, with the result that the ink is enabled to flow from the reservoir and that the pen writes".

The design of a nib, a reservoir - and of a holder into which to fit them - presented no real problems. The challenge lay in the feed. If air could not make its way into the reservoir then ink could not be released. The 'leak' of air had to be scrupulously controlled; too little air and the nib was starved of ink, too much air and the pen would flood. Furthermore, a safety margin had to be built in so that if the air in the reservoir expanded by the warmth of the body or by a change in outside atmospheric pressure, the ink in the reservoir was not expelled. Ink-stained clothing was the penalty paid by many early experimenters and their customers.

Throughout history ingenious men have tried to nail this technical challenge. The earliest detailed reference to a functional fountain pen is as early as the tenth century A.D. Between the years 969 and 975 Al-Qadi al Numan ibn Muhammed, the Chief Judge of the Caliph Mu'izz, compiled 'The Book of Assemblies and Discussions'. In it he recounts an episode in the life of the Caliph, his master:

'When Mu'izz talked about the pen he extolled its merits and portrayed it as the symbol of the secret of knowledge. He then said that he wanted a pen made which would write without the need of an inkpot. "Such a pen," said the Caliph, "will be self-sufficient; it will hold the ink inside it. One could write whatever one wanted with it, but as soon as one had finished the ink would withdraw and the nib would dry out. The writer could keep such a pen in his sleeve without the fear of any stain or leakage of the ink, for the ink would flow only when the pen wrote. It would certainly be a marvellous device. It would be unique."

After a few days the craftsman to whom this pen had been specified produced a model made of gold. The Caliph filled it with ink; he could write with it. But more ink flowed than was needed, so the craftsman was instructed to adjust it. The pen was brought back after it had been rectified. It was turned upside down and held at all angles - and no ink leaked. As soon as he began to write with the pen, he wrote the best hand for as long as he wished; when he lifted the pen from the paper the ink on the nib disappeared. Thus I witnessed a wonderful work, the like of which I had never thought to see.....'.

The evidence of the manuscript would seem to describe an adequate modern fountain pen. It held its own ink; it did not leak; it wrote as soon as the nib came into contact with the writing surface. It was, however, a one-off; it had no successor.

A fountain pen in embryo was described and illustrated by Daniel Schwenter in his 'Deliciae Physic - Mathematicae' published in Zurich in 1651. His solution for a pen with its own supply of ink was to pierce a hole at the tip of a small quill. The small quill was filled with ink and then inserted into a larger quill, the latter cut as a pen. The open end of the small quill was plugged with sealing wax or a cork. A steady supply of ink was fed to the nib of the second quill by squeezing the pen gently. The problems inherent in charging such a device with ink are not recorded.

The Parisian jewellers of the 1650s were experimenting and seem to have developed a marketable product. Two young Dutchmen were staying in the City and they kept a diary. On 11 July 1657: "We went to see a man who has developed a marvellous invention which enables one to write conveniently. He has made silver pens in which one puts ink which does not dry out and, without filling it again, one can write half a sheet of paper straight off..... He sells them for 10 francs - or for 12 francs to those whom he knows to be desperate to have one",

Perhaps one of these pens crossed the Channel. On 5th August 1663 Samuel Pepys spent a disreputable afternoon towsing and handling one Miss 'xs' "but as wanton and bucksome as she is, she dares not adventure upon that business - in which I very much commend and like her."

On his return home: "This evening came a letter about business from Mr Coventry and with it a silver pen he promised me, to carry ink in; which is very necessary. So to prayers and to bed". Coventry's note to Pepys read: 'I send you herewith the pen I promised you without the ceremony of making a new case for it, which would require time, and might whet your appetite (by the expectation) beyond the fare.' Four days later he wrote, "This day I began to use the silver pen Mr Coventry did give me." Unfortunately there are no further references in the Diary to this pen, unless the silver pen that he took with him to Tangier in 1683/84 was the same one. It seems likely that he was the first of a long line of dissatisfied users. He certainly was not using it two years later when on 28th November 1665, he gives us an insight into how the old system worked:

"Up before day, and Cook and I took a hackney coach, appointed with four horses to take us up, and so carried us over London bridge. But there thinking of some business, I did light at the foot of the bridge, and by help of a candle at a stall where some pavers were at work, I wrote a letter to Mr Hayter; and never knew so great an instance of the usefulness of carrying pen and ink and wax about one".

In 1710 Matthew Henry, a nonconformist minister and scholar, published his 'Exposition of the Prophetical Books of the Old Testament'. He made an allusive reference in his commentary on 'the seven pipes to the seven lamps' in Chapter IV of the book of Zacharia; "Without any further care the lamps received oil or fat as they wasted it (as in those which we call Fountain Inkhorns or Fountain Pens)"..... This may well be the first reference to the word 'fountain pen' - an odd term, on reflection, since the one thing to avoid was any attempt on the part of the pen to spout ink.

Monsieur M Brion was Chief Instrument Maker to Louis XIV. He published 'The Construction and Principal Uses of Mathematical Instruments', a work which contained the first detailed specification of a metal fountain pen. In 1723 Edmund Stone made an English translation. Brion used the term 'plume sans fin' which Stone translated 'fountain pen' The device consisted of a barrel with a screw-on cap at one end; the other end was connected to a short tube to serve as a rudimentary feed over which a quill nib was fitted. The ink was poured into the barrel with a funnel and held in vacuum when the cap was replaced on the principle of a pipette. The specification in itself was enough to deter the potential user: "When the .... pen is to be used, the cover must be taken off and the pen a little shaken in order to make the ink run freely. Note: if the porte-craion does not stop the mouth of the piece 'F', the air by its pressure will cause the ink to run out all at once". The technical problem in a nutshell.....

The slow progress of technical development in the eighteenth century is well illustrated by the fact that Brion's work was reprinted in 1758 using the same illustrations and a virtually identical plate was reproduced in the Dictionary of Arts and Sciences in 1764. Actual models of Brion's basic design have survived and one of them is dated 1702. Throughout the eighteenth century stationers' trade cards and advertising material featured fountain pens as part of the normal stock in trade. In 1757, for example, Wickes and Wakelin, the London silversmiths, were retailing fountain pens in silver and gold at £2.10s.0d.

Fanny Burney seems to have possessed a fountain pen in 1789. Her journal entry for 18th August reads: "This morning the Royals were all at a grand naval review. I spent the time very serenely in my favourite wood, which abounds in seats of all sorts; and there I took a fountain pen, and wrote in my rough journal for copying to my deal Sorelle....."

Another fleeting reference occurs in the records of the East India Company. In the middle of the eighteenth century the English under Clive and the French under Dupleix were manoeuvering both diplomatically and militarily for control in India. In 1749/50 this power struggle centred on the Carnatic and in particular on the sympathies of the Nawab, Nasir Jang. Two English ambassadors were appointed to the Nawab's court and on 7th April 1750 they secured English influence with handsome presents. Among these was a fountain pen, with which the ambassadors reported the Nawab was delighted. Nasir Jang wrote a letter to King George III with his new pen, a letter which set down his intention soon to have the four corners of the world in his possession.

The Parisian goldsmiths and silversmiths continued to experiment with metal pens. What appears to be the direct ancestor of the fountain pen was developed by Coulon de Thevenot. The 'Moniteur Universel' carried two articles outlining his new invention in its issues of 17th October and 3rd December 1790. The pen is described as capable of writing for several hours without the need of refilling and of being a great aid to travellers and to those taking notes at public meetings. He sold it cheaply; a penstaff, in ivory or ebony, with six pens and a bottle of ink cost 6 livres. Thevenot called his invention 'the pen without end'. Thevenot also developed a system of shorthand. He was a man of some distinction. His death, however, was messy. He was wounded at the battle of Leipzig in 1813. A troop of Cossacks stripped him of his clothing and left him to die in the mud.

In the nineteenth century the pace of applied ingenuity quickened. Frederick Folsch took out a patent from his shop in Oxford Street in May 1809 in which his pen had a spring-loaded plunger to control the ink supply. In the same year Joseph Bramah patented a pen which was a tube filled with ink the walls of which were thin enough to enable the pressure of the fingers to control the flow of ink to the nib. John Scheffer developed a pen in which the ink was contained in a section of the quill barrel covered with sheep gut in a metal case. This was advertised by one J H Farthing, in Robson's 'London Commercial Directory' of 1826/27 as 'Scheffer's Patent Penograph'. James Henry Lewis, an itinerant writing teacher of Ebley, Gloucestershire, developed Bramah's patent further in December 1819. By 1826 he was claiming "many thousands of them have been made use of in various parts of the Kingdom, and have given universal satisfaction." A more significant development was John Jacob Parker's patent of 1832: he introduced the first self filling fountain pen. It worked by immersing the nib in the ink; by turning the end of the case an internal piston drew ink upwards to fill the resulting vacuum - a principle which is still in use today. The tube was lined with glass or gold to resist the corrosive action of the inks of the day.

Between 1809 and 1900 at least forty-four patents were registered or pens actually marketed which were termed stylographs or styluses. They relied, not on a slit nib, but on a range of tubes, points or needles to lay the ink on the paper. Between 1849 and 1900 another 98 patents were filed covering fountain pens proper. Most of them were unsuccessful and many of them were far too complicated for everyday use. There were so many snags to be overcome that even if one part functioned adequately, another failed to do so. Towards the end of the century the public's attitude changed from one of eager optimism to one of scepticism and downright hostility. "Many a good man suffered an eclipse of twenty five years' accumulation of Christianity in a five minute experiment with a fountain pen".

Rudyard Kipling was writing throughout these times of trial and experiment. He was almost obsessional about the tools of his trade. "I used a slim octagonal-sided agate penholder with a Waverley nib. It was a gift and, when, in an evil hour, it snapped, I was much disturbed. Then followed a procession of impersonal hirelings, each with a Waverley.... I wallowed in the pin-pointed 'stylos' and its successor, the 'fountain' which, for me, meant geyser pens.... I tried pump-pens with glass insides, but they were 'of intolerable entrails'.... in later years, I clung to a slim, smooth, black treasure - Jael was her office name - which I picked up in Jerusalem. For my ink, I demanded the blackest, and, had I been in my father's house, as once I was, would have kept an ink-boy to grind me Indian ink".

The most significant breakthrough was Lewis Edson Waterman's patent of 1884. Waterman was an insurance agent, a calling which demanded the immediate production of a pen and some ink at the end of each sell. In order to allow no time for his prospect to escape the hook, he used to carry his own pen and ink bottle in a specially designed case. Nonetheless, he is said to have suffered some bruising experiences. Waterman's first fountain pen was a classic in its simplicity. It consisted of a barrel which did duty as the reservoir of ink; the barrel carried the point section and the feed bar fitted tightly into the latter; the ink duct was formed along the upper section of the feed bar and consisted of longitudinal fissures or saw cuts. The gold nib was held in place between the upper surface of the feedbar and the point section and the ink was fed to the nib point by gravity and capillary action. Air was drawn into the reservoir along the fissures of the feedbar. The pen was filled with an eye dropper. He made and sold his pen for two years before he applied for his patent: in the first year he sold 200 and in the second 500.

The 'Ideal' pen was a winner. It consisted of only four parts and a nib. Careful workmanship meant that it was leakproof. Its success in the marketplace enabled Waterman to set up a factory at Seymour, Connecticut, for making the parts from vulcanised rubber and for final assembly and a second factory in New York City for the manufacture of gold nibs. His sales and administration was located in a six storey building on Broadway below Courtland Street. Waterman established himself as the leading manufacturer in the fountain pen market. An early customer remembers him:

"The shop attracted my attention from the start. To a chance visitor, the owner seemed to combine in one person, the functions of inventor, manager, foreman, salesman and promoter. He was strong in the faith that he had produced a pen which would force all his rivals from the field....."

INK

Kipling's Indian houseboy would have been equally at home serving the needs of a Chinese scribe of the legendary epoch of the Five Sovereigns or an Egyptian administrator of one of the early dynasties. Ink seems to have been developed by both civilisations at about the same time - around 2500 B.C. One historian attributes the original idea to one Tien-Lcheu in the year 2697 with a somewhat suspect precision. Such ink was a mixture of carbon and a binding agent such as gum arabic, soluble in water. Carbon took the form of fine soot - bamboo soot was often preferred - or lamp black. The latter could be produced by playing the flame of a candle against a cold surface and by scraping up the carbon deposits that resulted. This soot was then pounded together with gum and the mixture was allowed to dry into sticks. The ink was then made ready for use by moistening the stick with water on a stone block or in a shallow mortar. This simple recipe - which subsequently involved a diverse range of subtle additives and manipulations - gave a full black line of fine grain and of outstanding permanence.

There were, however, two snags. Firstly, it was a paint which was held to the surface of the papyrus, vellum or parchment by the binding action of the gum. If the gum perished, then the writing was lost. Secondly, the ink required constant stirring to keep the carbon in solution; its natural tendency was to silt up the bottom of the container. Nevertheless, this formula served its purpose admirably from the dawn of history to Rudyard Kipling, less than a hundred years ago. Its Latin name was 'atramentum'.

But the word 'ink' is derived from the Greek 'enkauston' or 'enkaiein' - to burn in. The Latin 'encaustum' was the purple ink used by the later Roman Emperors to sign state documents. The word implies an acid - and in practice, this meant tannic acid. This acid was extracted from gall nuts; abnormal excrescences formed on trees and shrubs throughout the world, but, particularly on those of the oak family. They are caused by insects - a species of aphids - which lay their eggs on the bark or twig of the tree; when the larvae hatch, they set up an irritation and the tree exudes sap round the larva; the sap dries in the sun to form the typical hard gall nut. In its due season, the insect bores its way through the nut which then turns white. The important point is that the gall is particularly rich in tannic acid (tannin) with a strong trace of gallic acid (trihydroxybenzoic acid). The ink maker greatly preferred the 'Blue Aleppo' from Asia Minor - the result of the interaction between the Gall Wasp, Cynips Tinctoria, and the small Syrian Oak, Quercus Infectoria. Blue Aleppos were exported throughout the known world.

The English oak apple is a gall, produced by the English gall wasp, Cynips Kollari. Another form of English gall was first observed in 1834 near Exeter. 'Devonshire' galls contain less tannic acid, though, nonetheless, they were soon put to commercial use.

Tannic acid was extracted by crushing the galls, soaking them in water, and by allowing them to ferment - a process which, in more modern times, was speeded up by the use of steam in the maceration of the galls and by inoculating the mass with the mould fungi, Aspergillus Niger and Flavus and Pencillium Glaucum. Thus mycology was of positive aid to industry.

The next essential stage was the addition of iron salts to the tannin and gallic acid. This gave a blue/violet solution, which, on exposure to the air, oxidises to a violet black with precipitation - resulting in a complex chemical structure ferroso - ferrio oxgallotannate. Ferrous sulphate was the iron salt generally chosen for ink making under its old name 'Copperas'.

Nobody knows the name of the scientist who developed this chemical solution to make an ink. It is generally believed such inks were in use about 200 A.D. However, Philon of Byzantium, writing in the third century B.C. knew all about galls and iron bearing copper salts. The basic recipe for such inks was well understood for over two thousand years. The whole operation was very much a do-it-yourself process - at least until the appearance of the itinerant ink-seller in eighteenth century London. Edward Cocker, a calligrapher and teacher of writing, usually included an ink recipe among his other instructions to his pupils. His method of making good ink is laid down in 'The Pen's Triumph' which he published in 1658.

"Take three ounces galls which are small and heavy and crisp, put them in a vessel of three pints of wine, or of rainwater which is much better, letting it stand, so infusing in the sun for one or two days; then take two ounces of copperas or of Roman Vitriol, well coloured and beaten small, stirring it well with a stick, which, being put in, set it again in the sun for one or two days more. Stir all together, adding two ounces of gum arabic of the clearest and most shining, being well beaten. And to make your ink shine and lustrous, add certain pieces of bark of pomegranate or a small quantity of double refined sugar, boiling it a little over a gentle fire. Lastly, pour it out and keep it in a vessel of glass or of lead, well covered ....." He was describing a process which had been well proven for at least 1,500 years.

Individual craftsmen strove for perfection and individual families compiled their own household recipes, which were handed down from one generation to another. Theophilus, a monk writing in the twelth century, proceeds thus:

"To make ink, cut for yourself some wood of hawthorn in April or May before they produce blossom or leaves. Collect them together in small bundles and allow them to lie in the shade for two, three or four weeks until they are fairly well dried out. (With a wooden mallet) pound these thorns on a hard piece of wood until you can completely peel off the bark, which you immediately put into a barrel full of water.... Allow it to stand for eight days until the water has drawn off all the sap of the bark. Then put this water into a very clean pot.... place it on the fire and heat it.... This done, boil down what remains of the water to one third (of its original quantity), pour it from this pot into a smaller one and continue to heat it until it becomes black and begins to thicken, taking particular care that you do not add any water except that which is mixed with the sap. When you see it become thick, add a third part of pure wine, put it into two or three new pots and continue to heat it until you see that it develops a kind of skin at the top".

Coloured inks were developed in similar ways. The Egyptians probably made their red ink from red ochre or other pigments, mixed with a binding agent. Sepia was extracted from the dark brown pigment of a small gland of the cuttle fish.

The Mollusc Murex yielded the famous Tyrian Purple. The Elder Pliny, whose commitment to scientific research led to his premature death amid the devastation of Pompeii in 79 A.D. - knew a lot about the juices of plants and other natural dyes for writing purposes. They included alazarin, indigo, pokeberries and forms of cochineal, compounded from the carapaces of the cochineal beetle.

Two of the glories of the Dark Ages are the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Book of Kells. Both were created soon after 700 A.D., the one on Holy Island off the Northumbrian coast, the other in a Celtic Monastry inland from Drogheda. The latter is a typically Irish document; the text is sloppy and full of uncorrected errors but the minute care lavished on the illustrations make it a work of high artistic achievement. The interesting point is the science and technology that lay behind this achievement. The gold, for instance, is not gold leaf, but orpiment or arsenic trisulphide, imported from Asia Minor. It gives a permanent golden sparkle but its high sulphur content would attack other colours with which it comes into contact. The monks understood this - and orpiment is either surrounded by a brown ink line or left with a boundary of unpainted vellum.

The cold green of the illuminations is verdigris or cupric acetate - which is corrosive enough to eat through normal vellum. Yet the monks devised a way of neutralising it so that it has behaved quietly ever since. The brilliant blues were made either from ultramarine or from azurite. Ultramarine could only have been imported from mines in Afghanistan through the hands of Arab traders. It was, in fact, a semi-precious stone, Lapis Lazuli, ground into powder - but this was not known in Europe for another four hundred years. Azurite is the carbonate of copper and could have been obtained from copper deposits in Scotland or Northern England - but this assumes that the technology of refining it was known and this is not certain. Crimson would have been extracted from the Kermes insect; the violet-blues may have been imported indigo or may have been extracted from the woad plant. The whole work is a testament of fine judgement, the technical mastery of complex materials and the existence of a commercial network that made such materials available.

Such inks suited the quill perfectly, but they too had drawbacks. Inks based on tannic and gallic acid have a tendency to fade from their original black to varying shades of brown. If they had too high an acid content, they showed an alarming habit of eating through the paper. But there was no compelling need to challenge them - and nobody did so. Sir Robert Boyle undertook some scientific analysis of iron-gall inks in the 1660's. Indigo, madder and logwood, imported from the West Indies, were tried as ink dyes in the eighteenth century. The fundamental formulae were not, however, developed further.

But inks which suited the quill did not suit the new steel pens. Iron-gall ink produced a powerful chemical reaction with steel and the point of the nib simply rusted away. It was the most pressing problem faced by the Birmingham manufacturers of the 1830's and the 1840's once they had mastered the engineering techniques of nib production. The properties of the ink damaged the reputation of their products. Pen wipers of all shapes and sizes were no answer.

Again, an identified demand led to a positive response. In 1834, Henry Stephens established one of the first ink factories making use of advances in chemistry and improvements in the composition of dyes. In doing so, he also established a dominating grip on the British market for a hundred years. "These compositions", he advertised "which have so remarkably extended the use of the steel pen, are brought to very great perfection, being more easy to write with, more durable and in every respect, preferable to the ordinary ink". Seven years later, James Perry launched his bid for the market - Perryian Limpid Ink. "This ink has a flowing property peculiar to itself, and does not corrode metallic pens as other inks". In 1856 the discovery of aniline dyes made possible newer and better ink formulations in which some of the more corrosive properties were reduced or eliminated.

THE FIRST PARKER PEN

Every manufacturing enterprise is founded on one good idea. George Parker was earning an inadequate salary as a member of the staff of the School of Telegraphy at Janesville. To increase his earnings, he took a part-time job as the local representative of the John Holland Fountain Pen Company - a manufacturer whose products were no better and no worse than the other fountain pens on the market in the late 1880's. In other words, they were not very good. (The company stayed in the fountain pen business for another forty-three years before it quietly foundered during the Depression). It was this part-time job which gave George Parker his idea and which triggered the chain of events that was to lead to a multi-national world wide operation. In an article in 'Systems Review' of October 1926, he remembers the events forty years earlier:

"My first experience in the pen business was a lesson in doing just this. I was teaching in a school of telegraphy here in Janesville, and I was selling fountain pens to the students for one of the old-time manufacturers, now out of business. (In a comment in a 1936 Parkergram George Parker mentioned that "In this school there was a great deal of copying of telegrams for practice and the pens that were used in that school were - well, shall I say - simply terrible. Anyway, I felt that I could make a better fountain pen....."). The idea of a fountain pen was popular with the students, but the pens themselves were continually giving dissatisfaction, and the principal trouble was that there was no provision in them for a steady flow of ink at all, when the air was trying to force its way up there, and too abundant a flow when it had forced its way up in a lump, so to speak.

"So far as the manufacturer was concerned, this evidently was regarded as a normal difficulty. But to me, forced to live with the students I had sold the pens to, it was a very great difficulty indeed. Other manufacturers had worked on the problem before that time, but what they had done was unknown to me. But as the students brought their pens to me, to see what could be done, I saw the need of a new sort of feed-shaft. I got a scroll saw, a file, and some other simple equipment, and tinkered until I had made up a shaft that would let the air up more steadily. I put these shafts into the pens of the manufacturers I was working for, solely to give satisfaction to the people I had sold. But when I had improved the pens in this way, it occurred to me that I might as well be selling pens of my own. I bought a supply of hard rubber tube, planned some new parts with the help of a local jeweller, ordered other parts from manufacturing jobbers - all for just the few dollars that I could spare - and in my bedroom in the small hotel where I was living, and while I was still a "professor" in the school of telegraphy, began assembling my own pens. That was the beginning of the Parker Pen".

From design and development he turned his attention to sales:

"The next step was to take out a patent. I knew nothing about this, but it didn't take me long to learn. When I had scraped up $5, I sent it away to a patent attorney in Washington, and eventually got my patent.

In the meantime, I was working with the H. A. Goodrich Company to manufacture some fountain pens for me in one or two gross lots, which they did, charging me a big price, but which I was willing to pay for getting them stamped 'Geo.S.Parker'. I was living at the Myers House, and being of a nature that always mixed with other fellows, it did not take me long to get acquainted with some of the travellers who inhabited that more or less famous hostelry, so that I made arrangements with some of these boys to take the pens out as a sideline. Of course, in those days, to sell a bill of a quarter of a dozen or half a dozen was going some, but they did occasionally send back a little order."

And from sales to administration and finance:

"At that time along came an insurance man, with long flowing sideburns. His name was W. F. Palmer. He was after me to insure me, but I did not have money enough. However, he was anxious to get into the fountain pen business, too. That was the inception of Mr. Palmer's and my partnership, which lasted nearly throughout his entire life. A finer chap than the late W. F. Palmer never lived.

He let me do the hustling and look after the sales end of the business, as well as the advertising, so that the work of each one of us was more or less a complement to the other. I had some experience in advertising and in 'drumming up' business at the school, so this came in very well with the little embryo fountain pen business.

Not a lot of capital was necessary in the early days of the Company. I sold a half interest in my patents and the little business for $1,000 to Mr. Palmer but he made out the cheque payable to the Parker Pen Company, and so this $1,000 was used in the development of the business instead of for me personally. After this, when we needed money we got it at what was then known as the Merchants' and Mechanics' Savings Bank, and got it of Mr Will Jeffris. I have often wondered what Will Jeffris saw about us, or me, that induced him to give us an occasional credit of $500, for it was certainly purely a moral loan. It was not based upon any collateral, because we had none. Eventually, Will's judgement proved to be entirely sound, and this Company has always stuck with the Bank.... He aided and encouraged the Parker Pen Company as probably no other man in Janesville ever did - or would".

Thus the basic idea developed into a manufacturing enterprise in embryo - and the show was on the road. The date was 1888. The fledgling company was legally incorporated on 8th March 1892.

On 23rd November 1893, George Parker, then aged 30, married Martha M Clements. They had two sons and a daughter - Russell, Kenneth and Virginia.

THE MAKINGS OF SUCCESS

Before 1880 there was no fountain pen industry in America. 1880 to 1910 were years of experiment and intense competition. Many men started businesses to exploit their own ideas about fountain pens. Few succeeded. It is difficult so long after the event to explain why most lost money while others became household names. Obviously, the product had to work - though the existence of a few good products opened up a large market for inadequate pens. One suspects that some of the other designs which were patented could have become acceptable writing instruments had they been effectively launched. The new business had to be adequately capitalized and financed - but on George Parker's own evidence only a small amount of capital was needed in the early days and funds were readily available to back a good proposition. The product had to be marketed successfully and it is possibly this requirement that differentiated the successes from the failures. Inventors and men of ingenuity often do not make good salesmen. Sound ideas may have been throttled at birth because the public never got to hear of them.

George Parker was determined to achieve a quality product. That was the reason for his entry into the field of fountain pens in the first place. "Make something better and the public will buy it". This continuous search for quality became a motivating force throughout Parker's history - and once the public became convinced that Parker meant it, it became a powerful marketing tool.

At the same time, George Parker proved that he was extremely sensitive in interpreting the preferences of consumers. Sometimes this meant identifying and reacting to changes in fashion; at other times, as with the launch of the Duofold, it meant anticipating or even creating changes in demand. He was very much at home in the hurly-burly of the market place. He loved the salesman's hassle. Two examples must suffice.

The public, of course, was not interested in the technical features of the fountain pen; it judged it, quite rightly, on its writing performance. Nonetheless, when he developed a device for returning any excess ink from the nib end of the feed back into the reservoir, so obviating the risk of accumulations of ink around the business end of the pen, the marketeer in him christened it 'the Lucky Curve'. No other manufacturer bothered to feature a component of his pen, but George Parker mounted a complete advertising campaign on it - and the name stuck. ("See that it has the Lucky Curve!"). He continued to do so until at least 1928. It also seems clear that he invested more in advertising, both to the public and to the trade, than any of his competitors.

The second example shows how in those pioneer days a company's survival depended on finding out what people preferred and then on producing a product that reflected those preferences.

"There came a time, for instance, when the public clearly wanted the feed-shaft on the under side of the pen, instead of on the upper side, where it always had been. Someone had put out a pen with the feed-shaft underneath, and it "took".

"There was a good deal of discussion among the pen makers as to whether the under-feed pens really were better; and I suppose it is still a debatable question. But that was not the point. The public had shown it wanted the under-feed pens, and was satisfied with their service.

More than one manufacturer went out of business on the issue; and although we were not first to adopt the under-feed plan, the fact that we were quick to adopt it, once the demand had appeared, clearly sent us forward, when we might have gone back.

We have had that sort of experience again and again".

"MAKE SOMETHING BETTER....."

George Parker's first patent was finally filed on 10th December 1889. It was soon followed by others. As he came to grips with the problems of pen manufacture new ideas were generated and new solutions found. On 18th March 1890 he patented a new design of an over-under feed and on 30th June 1891 an improved type of overfeed. On 12th December 1893 he was awarded the patent for a new feed which featured two bent prongs at the rear; this developed into the 'Lucky Curve' which was patented on 4th December 1894. The Lucky Curve was a significant step forward; Parker advertisements majored on the term for the next 35 years. The problem lay in the fact that when a pen was held upright - say, in the pocket - most of the ink drained back into the reservoir through the pull of gravity. Some ink, however, was held in the feed tube as the result of capillary attraction. If the pen was in a jacket pocket the warmth of the body raised the temperature of the air inside the pen which in turn forced the residual ink out of the feed tube and expelled it out of the nib end. When the owner removed the cap the surplus ink got on his fingers. The lucky curve involved a bend in the tubular feed to bring its end into contact with the inside of the barrel. This exerted a downward capillary attraction which ensured that the surplus ink in the feed was drawn back into the reservoir. Parker pens were thus established as 'clean' pens - a significant customer benefit.

On 28th June 1898 he was granted a patent for the first slip-fit type of outer cap. This was a major improvement because previously the caps fitted only onto the 'section'. His new cap slipped over the barrel and fitted snugly. Two years later he incorporated a taper into the outer cap to secure a tighter fit between cap and barrel. On 4th April 1899 he patented the first 'jointless' pen - another radical improvement. There was no thread to wear, no nozzle to get stuck and no joint to leak. It was fitted with a patented anti-break cap which was much stronger than those offered by competitors at the time. The jointless pen was the first Parker model to be advertised in the U.K. at Christmas the same year.

At the turn of the century fountain pens were classified into three categories. 'Standards' were filled by unscrewing the nib section and transferring ink to the reservoir by means of an eye dropper. 'Safeties' were standard pens which incorporated some device for preventing the leakage of ink. 'Self fillers' carried some suction device for drawing up ink from an inkwell into the reservoir. Transferring ink with an eye dropper was a tiresome and messy undertaking. The public wanted self fillers. What the public wanted, so far as George Parker was concerned, it got:

"Way back in 1904 the little over-feed pens being made at that time were getting out of date. It was up to me to see about getting a self-filling fountain pen. As nobody seemed to have an idea about self-filling pens, I established a precedent that has since been followed by many on the outside. I took it up with a very smart inventor of agricultural machines for the Janesville Machine Company. He worked out a self-filling fountain pen that worked nicely....."

He then ran into difficulties with his patent:

"I found there was a patent issued in the east to a man by the name of Mr Pikard. So I wrote to Mr Pikard to see if he would be willing to sell his patent. Lo and behold, the letter came back unclaimed. I wrote to the postmaster in the town of Mr Pikard's address and he had never heard of him.

Next step, I went to New York, to the Old Wardorf Astoria, and looked over their library of city directories. Pikard, being a peculiar name, was somewhat difficult to find. Finally, I located a man by this name over in Jersey City. So the next day I dropped over to Jersey City, and, would you believe it, this was the very man I had been searching for. Just like a needle in the haystack, finding him".

"Yes, he had been in the pen business, but had not made a go ot it. I took him over to New York and bought the patent from him for a few hundred dollars. This patent is the same as we used all along for the Duofold, except we improved upon it considerably, so much so that the improvements were patented".

The Parker self filling pen consisted of a rubber ink container within the barrel and a pressure bar which could deflate the sac and then draw ink up to fill the vacuum. It was a major technical advance within the constraints of its time. The problem was that the rubber technologists had not yet discovered how to protect their product from the oxidising effects of the atmosphere or from the chemical action of ink. The life of the sac was often nasty, brutish and short. The Parker solution had one significant advantage. Other self-fillers of the period had a slot or some other opening in the wall of the barrel through which pressure could be applied to depress the sac. If and when the sac failed any ink would escape through this hole and would stain the handbag or the clothing. The Parker mechanism had no such opening; it was operated by a button concealed by a blind cap at the end of the barrel. If the sac leaked, the resulting nonsense was contained inside the barrel. The blind cap served as a seal like a cork in a bottle.

On 30th January 1905 came the significant spear feed patent. Hitherto, when the pen was suspended over the paper a drop of ink would gather on the point of the nib. The spearhead feed prevented the accumulation of this excess ink and its irritating consequences. Other ingenuities followed. On 27th May 1907 he patented the level-lock clip. This clip lay flush in the cap when the pen was in use; when the cap was put back on to the pen before it was returned to the pocket, the barrel forced the clip proud so that it gripped the cloth of the pocket more tightly and therefore held the pen more securely. On 25th April 1911 the 'Lucky Curve' device was improved - a cut in the end which came in contact with the barrel enabled the ink to drain back more freely into the sac. On 4th June 1912 a new form of safety cap appeared. It was used in the Jack Knife Safety pen to obviate any risk of leakage. The Jack-Knife pens of the 1910s were among the most beautiful and efficient writing instruments of the day. They were offered in black-chased hard rubber and with precious metal decoration. They were excellent writers and were advertised as well-made, sturdy and reliable tools. In design the later models were the obvious precursors of the flagship of the twenties - the Duofold.

On 5th September 1916 a new type of washer or tassie on the cap was patented. This was actually developed by William Moore, an employee at the Janesville plant. He voluntarily made over his patent to the Company but George Parker insisted on paying him a royalty for the seventeen years that the patent still had to run. This new device enabled the clip to be located at the extreme end of the cap. Parker pens from that date sat deeply and securely in the pocket with only a fraction of the cap protruding. This, again, was perceived as a valuable customer benefit in days when the clip was located half way up the cap, so that the pen rode inconveniently high in the pocket.

It comes almost as a relief to identify an innovation that did not perform as planned:

"A man associated with us was John Goellner. He was an exile from Serbia, having been chased out by King Peter. John worked in the office, spoke no English, studied like a trooper and eventually became a very valuable man to us. Shortly after 1904 we sent him over to Germany to see if he could pick up something new. He came back with what is known as Galalith - a Greek word meaning milk-stone - a beautiful coloured material made of milk curd.

We thought we had a great find and sold a number of pens in this material. Had we been manufacturing self-filling pens we would have made a great go, but the ink coming into contact with this more or less porous material oozed through - and a white fountain pen became a muddy black in a short time. So we had to abandon this until we manufactured the self-fillers; then it went fine."

Some ten years' later Parker Ivorine pens were made from Galilith. This ladies' range was launched in 1916 in six colours - French grey, crimson, royal purple, coral, turquoise blue and jade green.

The significant point is that as early as 1905 a Parker pen embodied four major features which made the product the equal of any other fountain pen on the market at that time. Firstly, the Lucky Curve drained excess ink back into the reservoir by capilliary attraction when the pen was upright in the pocket. The Lucky Curve prevented the ink from seeping through the nozzle onto the nib section and into the outer cap when the heat of the body expanded the air in the barrel. Secondly, it had a filling mechanism which, although it was not used on all models, worked well in practice. Thirdly, the spearhead feed prevented excess ink from accumulating on the point of the nib and then dropping off in everyday use. Fourthly, the slip-fit outer cap formed a seal with the barrel of the pen itself instead of with the leading joint section of the nozzle. George Parker's next challenge was to offer these mechanical achievements in a form which the public wanted and to set up a network of dealers to sell the product.

"DRUMMING UP BUSINESS"

The early catalogues are the best evidence of the range of Parker products before the First World War. When manufacture was largely a matter of applied manual skill with little in the way of tooling costs, even a small company could indulge in the apparent luxury of a wide variety of models. Parker pens came in all shapes and sizes and in a wide variety of expensive decoration. In 1906, for example, they ranged in price from twenty dollars to one dollar. Twenty dollars would buy a handsome man's pen, the barrel and cap of which were covered in 18K gold, chased in an ornate pattern of vines, flowers and leaves. "We do not expect this pen will ever come into very general use" challenged the advertisement - a marketing tactic which still had life in it when the Premier range was launched nearly eighty years later. Ten dollars was the cost of a fine pen, the rubber vulcanite of which was covered in heavy 18K gold plate. A similar pen decorated in silver filigree cost five dollars. Not until the $2.50 mark was the choice limited to a serviceable writing instrument in black or mottled rubber. Any argument was a good sales argument. The humble Bulldog Special, designed to be carried flat in the pocket or the handbag "has been sold in large numbers in London, England, and seems destined to be a great seller in this country". (Who sold it in England in 1903?)

The precious metals that he used and the range of decoration to which he put them are evidence of George Parker's determination to gain a foothold in the profitable quality market - however small that market might appear to be at first sight. In 1906, for example, he launched the Emblem pen - he undertook to sculpt the logo of any club or society on the solid gold band of the cap - for twelve dollars. "Makes a fine present for some secret order man". In 1907, he introduced the Snake pens which are now much sought after collectors' items. Pen No.37 was decorated with a coiling snake in sterling silver; Pen No.38 offered the same decoration in solid 18K gold.

In the early years of the century the giant pen came into vogue as the ultimate symbol of fountain pen prestige. George Parker's first model to compete with these dinosaurs of the pen world was the 'Black Giant', which he launched about 1905. It was a huge monster, featuring a slip-on type cap and a smooth shoulderless section. It was filled with an eye-dropper and had a conventional threaded section-barrel joint. It had a long life. In 1913 the screw-on type safety cap and washer-clip were incorporated though the eye-dropper filling system was retained. By 1921 it had been furnished with a special 'spearhead' feed in which the 'Lucky Curve' action operated within an enveloping sleeve. It was also fitted with a removable blind cap, as if for a button-filler. There was, however, no hole in the barrel to accommodate a button. It would seem therefore that there were definite plans to launch a self-filling version when suddenly the line was discontinued. It was dropped either to make way for the production of the Duofold or simply because there was no market for such monsters in the styling developments of the twenties. Most other companies withdrew their giant pens at about the same time.

Parker's 1910 catalogue is impressive in its range of product. It opens with a technical description and an advertising plug for both the Lucky Curve and the Spearhead Ink Controller. Specific messages are beamed at the Businessman. ("These captains of industry, whose time is valuable, want a pen for use"), to Bookkeepers ("We have relieved thousands of bookkeepers of the drudgery connected with their work"), the Bill Clerk and the Stenographer. It is the pen for ladies:

"Pleasant thoughts and good friends
Belong to those who use Parker Pens".

It is perhaps unfair to expect George Parker to be a good poet on top of his better proven talents. The product range was made up of

- The basic screw-joint pen in mottled or chased vulcanised rubber in three sizes at from $2.00 to $3.00. The jointless version is offered in the same sizes at the same prices.

- A new range of four pens, virtually identical to the above, but with an ornately chased surface finish. These retailed at from $3.00 to $4.00.

- There were eleven different versions of the Jack-Knife Safety ranging from the baby size at $2.50 to a model furnished with rolled gold trim at $6.00. Most of these were offered in plain black, mottled, or chased rubber. It was indicated that larger Jack Knives could be made to special order.

- Three models were illustrated with coloured crowns on their caps. "In stores, offices and other places where several have fountain pens the coloured crown can be used to identify a pen from among those belonging to others....."

- At this point there is a move up-market with a gold or silver ornament and a nameplate set in the centre of the barrel ($3.50), a sterling silver hammered swastika design - the symbol of good luch - at $12.00 and a similar design in gold at $15.00.

- Four ornately decorated models used combinations of 'corrugated pearl' held in place by gold bands, a gold covered design at $10.00, pearl mounting held by 18K gold plate in a floral pattern ($10.00) and a plain finish with a white cap with gold mounts at $5.00.

- George Parker never ignored a minority. The Emblem pen was still advertised. The shorthand pen cost $4.00 in two sizes. The Bookkeepers Special - a double ended pen with black ink at one end and red ink at the other - was priced at $6.00. More bizarre, the physician's pen was furnished with a clinical thermometer, set inside the barrel concealed by a secondary cap. "It is the ne plus ultra. It is a convenience you owe to yourself to own".

- The du luxe top of the range was not illustrated in the catalogue. The 14K AX in hand-chased engraving with floral figure as the principal motif cost $60.00 The BX at $75.00 featured an antique gold background effect with intertwined leaves and vines standing out in bas-relief. The CX was a similar model but "the little gems used at different points lend additional attractiveness to this superb pen". It cost $85.00.

- The DX was made in 14K gold with a satin finish. "Ten small sparkling diamonds are used as centres of the floral figures that constitute the essential part of the design". It was priced at $100.00 - "altogether a most acceptable gift for a lady". Special orders could be fulfilled at $75, $100 and $150 upward "depending on the intricacy of the design and kind of settings employed".

- Among the accessories were two types of gift box, one covered in plush and lined with satin, the other featuring red morocco. On their own they cost a dollar; they were supplied free with any pen above $10.00 in price. Inks consisted of Traveller's ink, Banker's Safety Ink and Parker's writing fluid. Detachable pen clips that clasped the cap cost 10 cents each. A repair service was offered - for all makes of fountain pen. Finally each pen was accompanied by a certificate guarantee for a full year against any defect or damage.

George Parker recalled his experience with Billy Collins, Parker's first fulltime salesman:

"Always before Billy, we had sold only through Salesmen who carried our pens as a side line and through occasional trips of our headquarters staff. But Billy ranged over the whole country, giving his full time to us and selling what seemed a great quantity of pens. He sold them in every section of this country and, when he had exhausted the opportunities here, as he thought, he went over to Cuba and sold a lot there. From Cuba he came back to Janesville and said he was going to work in the factory awhile. The market, he said, was saturated.....!" George's reaction was prompt. He was "led to send Billy back on the road and another salesman besides - and to double our sales in a year".

Less is known about the development of his dealer network and again such evidence as there is lies in his advertisements. In 1897 the latter were directing potential customers to their nearest dealer. If he did not stock Parker then orders could always be fulfilled direct. In December, 1903, he claimed 9,000 of the best dealers. In 1907 he was advertising for more: "We want good A-No.1 dealers in all parts of the world". The same advertisement listed a European agency in Stuttgart, a Canadian agency in Montreal and other agencies in Mexico City and in Sydney, Australia. In 1911, there is the first reference to a Parker retail store in Park Row, New York. Within six years this store had moved to the Singer Buildings and other Parker stores had been opened in Boston, Chicago and San Francisco. In 1917 his advertisements claimed that Parker dealers now numbered twenty thousand. George Parker had come a long way since he had had to rely on the commercial travellers who propped up the bar of the Myers Hotel in Janesville.

THE BIG FOUR

The lines along which the fountain pen industry was developing were becoming clear by the end of the First World War. There were some fifty-eight manufacturers in the United States but most of the ineffective optimists had been filtered out. L. E. Waterman was producing a million and a half fountain pens each year: the continued success of the modified 'Ideal' pen enabled him to dominate the market for forty years. However, there were already signs of a certain conservatism and distrust of new ventures. The Waterman self-filling pen did not reach the market until 1913 - some seven or eight years after George Parker launched his version. Quality of product was Waterman's major marketing theme.

John C. Wahl founded the Wahl Adding Machine Company in September 1905 - to manufacture adding machines and other metal products. The Company made a dramatic change of direction when, in 1914, it purchased a controlling interest in the Eversharp Pencil Company. The Eversharp pencil was the brainchild of a Japanese inventor, Tokuji Hayakawa, who began to export it to the U.S.A in 1912. It soon earned wide popularity and sales. Wahl set up his own manufacturing plant in Chicago. The huge sales of the pencil gave Wahl a solid base to expand into the writing instrument market. In 1917 he bought the Boston Fountain Pen Company which already had a proven quality product. This company was also relocated to Chicago. Wahl then sold his interests in adding machines to Remington. The outcome was that by 1920 Wahl was selling twelve million pencils a year and one and a half million 'Tempoint' fountain pens, which quickly earned a reputation for reliability and for smoothness of writing. It may be significant, however, that Wahl bought his expertise and designs from outside. As late as July 1922, for example, he bought the Washington Rubber Company to strengthen his resources in the production of the hard rubber from which most writing instruments were then made. This was four years before the first plastic hit the market. He had no track record of his own of technical expertise or originality.

Walter Sheaffer on the other hand was from the George Parker mould. He continued with his development work for a further five years before he felt sufficiently confident to risk all his life savings and the reasonable security of his jewellery shop for the uncertainty of a manufacturing enterprise. He took this step in 1912 and incorporated the W. A. Sheaffer Pen Company with a share value of $35,000. During a fantastic year, he achieved sales of $100,000 - some 3% of the fountain pen market - and profits of $17,500 - or 50% of the initial investment. He, too, insisted on standards of product quality far in advance of the accepted standards of the industry.

Then there was Parker, a small provincial pen manufacturer fighting to achieve a national reputation and a national market.

The First World War presented George Parker with a new opportunity:

"Well, things continued about so-so until theWorld War One came on. Then an idea came to me of supplying pens to the soldiers with ink tablets furnished in the pens. In order to give the soldiers all the information as to where the ink tablets could be found, we put the tablets in a little blind cap at the end of the holder, and so that the boys would not overlook the fact that this was a cap, we made it red, the rest of the pen being black". It was a development of the Lucky Curve without its filling mechanism.

"We sold vast quantities of these pens which were shipped through the War Department to the boys over in France, and it would not surprise me if there were many of the American Expeditionary Force who still have these fountain pens today. They were not self-fillers. Simply drop a tablet in the barrel, fill the barrel with water, and you had a complete ink plant".

In 1918 Parker sales exceeded $1 million for the first time.

Throughout these years, the company had been operating from a number of scattered locations in Janesville - including the Myers and Beverley Theatre buildings, the Young American block and the upper two floors of the Gazette building. In 1919, encouraged by continuous growth, the company floated an issue of preferred stock and built No.1 plant at Court Street. This new five storey building was designed to be converted quickly into flats if pen sales slumped. "We were going ahead", commented George Parker, "but we spent a lot of time looking over our shoulders".

Meanwhile George Parker's two sons began to take an active lead in the management of the Company. Russell who joined the Company in 1914 concentrated on production and certain areas of administration. He had earned the reputation of a tireless worker with a keen business brain. He knew every Parker employee by name. Kenneth came into the business in 1919, having served in the Naval Air Service during the war. Afterwards he had a year's grounding with the Lord and Thomas advertising agency. He proved himself to be a brilliant marketing man. He had a flair for design and he had a confident feel for the consumer pulse. Together the younger generation made a strong and well balanced combination.

THE DUOFOLD

Trade was poor in the years immediately after the war and the outlook was grim. Then George Parker followed a daring hunch and anticipated a market change. It was L. M. Tebball, the Washington District Manager, who triggered the idea with a proposal for a super fountain pen - an oversize pen with an increased ink capacity, with a bright red barrel and black tips and a 25 year guarantee on the nib. It would sell at $7 at a time when $2.75 was a good average price to pay for a pen:

"One of our most interesting and profitable experience in meeting a new demand has been with the Duofold pens. The demand - a demand for a brighter, better and more expensive pen - was latent. Nobody had tested it out. Nobody could say positively it was there, or had thought much about it. We had to pioneer it uncovering our market.

How did we first get a hint of the demand? It came first from one of our district managers, and was at first completely rejected. It came from him again, and was again rejected - so unresponsive is it possible to be to even the best ideas. But because he was a good salesman, and had clear vision, and a consequent firm conviction, he raised the question again; he did not write this time; he came into headquarters with the idea.

I shall not soon forget the interview here in my office, in which we decided for the pen. It was in the spring of 1921 - that trying year - and the district manager was proposing a pen that was to sell for more than twice what the ordinary fountain pen had been sold for".

The argument about its being a bad time was obvious. And he was ready for it.

"Look at the cars going up and down this hill", he said. And we looked awhile, out on the drive running up by the Rock County Court-House. "They're not the cheapest cars, many of them, you see", he said, "and many of them are new. People have been buying these expensive cars this year. For all we hear about hard times, they've had the money. Do you think they could not afford to pay, that they would not be glad to pay, $7 for a fountain pen that they could be proud to own and use?"

"The whole Duofold business hung in the balance for the moment. And then we decided to try out the idea.

The first of the pens made up - just a handful, really, made up for a test - were sent to the branch manager who had suggested them, and he sold them. He sold some more that followed. Other branch managers and salesmen, also, sold the few that were sent them; but still others, the majority of our sales force, reported resistance from the trade. The retailers, they said, were afraid of a pen that sold for so much more than people were used to paying.

We had at least a glimmer of evidence that we were at work on a good idea, but there were still two steps before us, before we could be sure: first, to prove to investigation, as well as we could, that the idea was right, and then, if it appeared that it was right, to go forward with the actual selling effort in the field by properly conservative stages.

"For it is clear that the policy of ready response to new demands is worse than useless, it is pretty nearly sure to be disastrous in the long run, unless it proceeds with the greatest care in testing the new demand".

However, only a small minority of dealers bought the pen and sold it. The rest reacted - with some justification - that red had been tried before and the public did not like it, that the price was too high, that the pen was too large and that the times were not right. The sales resistance from the majority raised the question as to whether it might not be well to manufacture a smaller size, call it Duofold, Junior, and sell it at $5. Kenneth Parker had great faith in the Duofold and great faith in advertising. It was through his relentless urging that the Company finally committed itself to a market survey.

One day he showed the Duofold pen to Lucius Crowell, explained the whole situation, and requested an opinion. He knew that Mr Crowell had had some experience with pen advertising, having previously handled the Sheaffer account as advertising agent.

The reply which Kenneth Parker received was this: "It is conceivable that the retailers are mistaken. They are basing their judgement, probably on custom and precedent. In my estimation the public will become enthusiastic about such a fine, beautiful, impressive and unusual pen". Of course, this is one man's opinion; but I believe you could make the Duofold so popular that the public would flock for it, and that means the retailers would do likewise".

It was decided to go out and try to get orders direct by personal canvass of a few hundred people without advertising. One man in Illinois, one in Indiana, and one in Ohio were sent out with three trays furnished with a range of different fountain pens. They canvassed, not the retailers, but the consumers for three weeks. They were told not to mention the price until the consumer enquired, then to note carefully any price resistance. The reports from the field were encouraging. 62% of those approached chose the red Duofold from the tray first. Furthermore sufficient people actually bought the Duofold to pay the costs of the research.

The subsequent decision to proceed was not in fact quite so instant a corporate concensus as George Parker suggests. Indeed the board meeting which reached the crucial decision to go ahead is said to have been one of the liveliest in the Company's history. On the one hand Kenneth Parker, then aged 25, was vehemently committed to the venture and he was supported by George Parker and Bill Palmer who was then Finance Officer. Among the other directors, however, there was the conviction that the Company already had a seasoned profitable range of products, a respectable share of the market and a reasonably secure future. Why put all this at risk for a product which had already given rise to so much disagreement? (They may not have been unmindful of Lewis Tebbal's own mediocre sales record). The issue in debate was whether a 'respectable' share of the market was good enough - or whether Parker would do genuine battle with the leaders of the industry.

It was with obvious reluctance that the board finally allotted $125,000 to fund a national advertising campaign.

A team of top salesmen then convened in Chicago. Each man was assigned an area of the city. He was issued with printed point of sale material displaying the name of each retailer on a card which held Duofold samples, a specimen window display and proofs of advertisements. In this planned campaign the team covered every pen outlet in Chicago in six days. It was a thrusting commando success. Enough Duofolds were sold that first week to pay for the advertising. The first advertisement, listing the name of dealers who had stocked the pen, was released in the Chicago Tribune on March 27th 1922.

Within three weeks the success of the Duofold venture was evident. Many Chicago dealers who had rejected the initial approach began telephoning orders through to the local office. The Directors met and decided to abort their initial plans - to organise a national launch in the autumn - in favour of an immediate canvas of the twelve largest cities in the States. It was then felt that Parker would be ready to go national at the beginning of the school year in the autumn. And this is what happened. There followed a period of demanding activity. Mr Blackman, the Sales Manager, was living on Pullman trains organising canvassing in city after city - Kenneth Parker was creating advertising campaigns, displays and promotion material, releasing them as soon as word came from the markets. Russell Parker was reorganising the factory at Janesville to equip it to meet an unprecedented demand. Bill Palmer was negotiating bank loans in Chicago to finance all these operations. In the meantime George Parker himself was concentrating on other issues - which are described below.

When Walter Sheaffer came to write his autobiography some twenty years later, he had a somewhat more jaundiced recollection of Parker's decision making processes. "In the year 1920, which was a year of short depression, one of our competitors had slumped in business to only a little over one million dollars. It looked as though things were pretty bad for them. But a salesman from Seattle, Washington, came to the factory when the proprietor was in Europe and Asia drumming up foreign business and touring the world, and wanted a coloured pen made up. As we get the story, he went into the basement and discovered some old red rubber that the factory were afraid to use because it was brittle, and red rubber is progressively brittle; the older it gets, the more brittle it gets. He had some of this red rubber made up in a red lacquer barrel with black tips on it and took it out and to his surprise it sold like wild-fire. We can't vouch for the authenticity of all the details of what we heard, but as we heard it, when the proprietor learned what they had done, he ordered them to discontinue making the red pen because the breakage would cause them a severe loss. But by the time he got home, their business had been so rehabilitated and the pen was selling so wonderfully well that it brought their business up many fold."

The Duofold itself was a handsome writing instrument. The gold nib was guaranteed for twenty five years. It continued to feature the 'lucky curve'. To fill it, the blind cap on the end of the barrel had to be unscrewed to reveal a button. When the button was pressed home it activated a spring bar down the side of the barrel which depressed the ink sac. When the button was released the ink sac resumed its normal shape, drawing ink up to fill the vacuum.

Some idea of the idiosyncracies of hand made pens can be gleaned from the instructions to Parker dealers:

"Although all pens are apparently identical some may require more time to fill than others because of minute variations in the dimensions of the feed channel or the degree of elasticity of the rubber sac. Thus some pens may need as much as 15 seconds' time to fill completely" (instead of the prescribed 10 seconds).

The filling mechanism, clip attachment and design style were derived from the Jack Knife Safety pen - in particular the Jack Knife 25, launched in 1917 - which had already established itself as a pen of proven performance. The technical improvement lay in a larger gold nib, a gold plated - as opposed to nickel-plated - clip and a high gloss red barrel of hard rubber. It was this latter feature that sold the pen to an enthusiastic public. To such effect that the term 'Big Red' has almost become synonymous with vintage fountain pens.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

The launch of the Duofold was an unambiguous statement that Parker was taking on the giants in the quality pen market. It was an instant success. "The year 1922 - the year of these first campaigns - closed with a 77% gain in our sales over 1921, notwithstanding that the first three months (prior to the Duofold advertising) registered a loss". In 1922 total Parker sales were just over two million dollars; in 1923 they exceeded three million; the following year, four million and in 1926 they achieved over five million dollars. The actual sales of 'the Big Red' are detailed in Appendix II.

Having identified a winning formula, the priority was to build on it. George Parker remembers, "Another branch manager came to see me some months later, much as the one I have already told of had come, with the idea of a super pencil - if I may use the expression. A pencil to correspond to the oversize pen. If people were willing to pay for a pen they could take pride in, he said, why would they not do as much for a pencil? It would have been easy, as I say, to turn our backs on the idea, especially in view of the attention the pens were requiring. And this is what we were inclined for a little while to do. But we put out a few of the pencils. We tested along in various ways, as we had with the pen. And one of our biggest sellers now is that pencil". The Duofold Senior pencil featured an excellent propel-repel mechanism of very high quality. Introduced in 1923 the 'Big Brother' was one of the most popular pencils of the twenties.

An interesting feature of the Duofold line is that the product underwent virtual continual modification. New materials and colours were constantly being introduced and detailed changes in styling and finishes were made. This means that any particular Duofold can be dated precisely to within a year or two of its date of manufacture.

The original launch model was of 'senior' size and made from a rather heavy hard rubber. It had no cap band. The barrel had a very large imprint, often termed by collectors as the 'giant' imprint. As we have seen it was priced at $7.00. In April 1922 both the Junior Duofold and the Duofold DeLuxe were launched. The Junior had a very large and deeply impressed engraving. It sold at $5.00. The DeLuxe model featured a very wide gold cap band which completely covered and protected the lip of the cap. The series included a Senior and a Junior pen - each equipped with a gold plated clip - and a Lady Duofold with a chatelaine ring set in the tassie sold at $5.00 Early in 1923 a single gold plated cap band - sometimes termed a cap girdle - was fitted to both the Senior and Junior models. Towards the end of the year the Duofold range was also offered in black hard rubber - 'flashing black' was the term used in the advertisements. In 1924 a lighter style hard rubber was adopted and the barrel imprint was reduced to a more moderate size - sometimes termed 'medium' imprint. This remained in use until the introduction of the plastic Duofolds in 1926. A Duofold pencil was launched the same year. It only appeared in one size and was equipped with a spoon clip whereas the pens were fitted with washer clips. The pencils featured a crown in gold which was not dissimilar to that of the successful range of Eversharp pencils of that date.

The one pencil was replaced the following year by three new pencils, designed to complement the corresponding fountain pens. The gold plated crown was redesigned on the Senior and Junior models and a washer-clip was incorporated at the base of each crown. The Lady pencil featured a ribbon ring set into the top of the crown. They sold at $4.00, $3.50 and $3.00 respectively. The Senior pencil earned the nickname of 'Big Brother' and 'Big Bro' was engraved on the barrel.

Parker's great strength lay in the sensitivity with which it identified, gauged and reacted to customers' taste and preferences. Throughout the twenties the Parker design team under the guidance of Kenneth Parker continued to make well-judged variations on this basic theme.

Some notes have survived from 1925 describing the processes by which the gold nibs were manufactured for the Duofold. The raw bullion of 24k fineness was supplied by the US Assay office in small bricks which ranged in value from $300 to $700. The pure gold was alloyed to 14k in a special furnace and poured into moulds to form ingots. These ingots were then rolled to a thickness consistent with the size of nib which was to be the end product. The nib for a Senior Duofold pen, for example, was larger and thicker than that of a Lady Duofold. After rolling and annealing the strips were some six feet long. The first rough blanks were stamped out of the strip, the shape of the blank corresponding to the shape of the ultimate nib. The tip of the nib was then grooved or notched and flattened.

The nibs were tipped with iridium, the hardest known metal that could in practice be worked. The iridium used was 'native' and mined in Tasmania. It was supplied in small pellets, each about the size of a pinhead. Four dozen die-cut blanks were placed in a row and an iridium pellet was located by a camel-hair brush soaked in borax flux in the small notch on the tip of each blank. An acetylene flame was then played upon the pellet. This softened the gold which flowed evenly round the pellet without appreciably affecting it.

The butt-end of the nib was then rolled and tempered before a punch press cut the blank to the precise shape required. A small hole was pierced into the nib and the name and size were stamped on it. The nib was then curved to its correct shape and underwent its first rough polish. It was subsequently polished on a hard felt wheel and then on a cotton buffing wheel.

The next operation was slitting. The nib was held against a copper slitting wheel some 4½" in diameter which revolved at 2,500 revolutions a minute. A slit was cut through the exact centre of the iridium pellet, straight through the nib as far as the pierced slot, which itself had to be dead centre. A fine mixture of oil and carborundum was used as a lubricant. The grinding operators then cleaned out the slit, ground the gold off the iridium, smoothed all rough spots and burrs and ground the nib to the required point - extra fine, fine, medium, broad, stub oblique or needle-point.

The nib was then given its final polish or 'rouging' before being tested by actually writing. It was then boiled in water and alkali, dried and weighed. The weighing was a simple internal control mechanism - to account for all the gold that had originally been issued to the department. Six different operators then subjected it to write tests. It then went forward for final assembly.

At each stage of each process the nib was rigorously inspected. All imperfect nibs were screened out, either to be reworked or scrapped. The fitting of the gold nib to the feed attracted particular scrutiny for a close and precise fit was vital for the effective functioning of the pen. The final product was finally inspected. Each point was tested yet again; each ink sac was checked to ensure efficient operation; each cap was removed and replaced to confirm a good fit and each barrel was given a high polish to bring out the full lustre and to remove any fingermarks or sediment of any kind.

AND THE COMPETITION

By the early twenties the technology of fountain pens had reached a point of development sufficient to satisfy the minimum specification that Mr Maginnis had laid down in his lecture of 1905. The pens wrote effectively and reliability could be taken for granted. A fountain pen was now part of everyday life. Technical improvements could still be developed but manufacturers now had the freedom to switch their emphasis to style and appearance. Sales promotion became more aggressive and sophisticated. They came to appreciate the importance of brand identification - when the Duofold was launched, Parker reduced the number of models in production from over four hundred down to thirty. Each manufacturer set about developing a pen which would offer the customer an identifiable benefit in everyday use and to adopt an external styling which would attract people to buy it. Each was seeking to launch a pen which would sell in sufficient volume to carry the brand name; inevitably this was usually a handsome man's pen, expensive and prestigious. It was then strongly promoted in systematic advertising campaigns to enable the rest of his range to sail in the wake of the flagship.

Waterman continued to dominate the market in the early twenties and in 1923 the 'Ripple' range was introduced. This was an attractive pen in a pattern of red and black which gave it its name. It appeared on the market in a number of forms - the 54, the 58, the 5 and the 7. Although it was a good product it does not seem to have had the customer appeal to sustain Waterman's predominance in the industry. Waterman slowly lost ground to both Parker and Sheaffer up to 1929. In that year Waterman launched the 'Patrician'. This was a real beauty - a large pen of a somewhat conservative design, priced at $10. It was produced in moss-agate, onyx, jet, emerald, nacre with chromium trim and turquoise. A smaller version - the 'Lady Patrician' flanked it at half the price. Already Waterman advertisements were talking in terms of 'accessory for her handbag'. Both pens sold well and restored Waterman's prestige in the quality market. Today the 'Patrician' is acknowledged to be one of the true classics in the development of the fountain pen.

Wahl initially held second place to Waterman, a position earned by the continued popularity of the Eversharp pencil and the huge volume of the sales of the Tempoint pen. In 1921 the Tempoint was reinforced by the Wahl pen with a metal barrel and a lever filling facility. The product was good; the full-size Wahl pen of 1925, for example, was a beautiful pen of excellent quality and design. But Wahl faced problems - and failed to solve them in time. Firstly, in 1922 the production facilities were such a shambles that the directors seriously discussed withdrawing from the market altogether. Sales were strong but complete closure seemed a genuine option. Only an injection of fresh management talent saved that situation. Secondly, Wahl failed to maintain its brand image with the impact achieved by its three major competitors. Thirdly, the absence of technical innovation began to tell. The Eversharp pencil, for instance, had a simple propelling mechanism. The lead was held inside the pencil by friction. This mechanism had a tendency to clog - it was inherent in the design. When both Parker and Sheaffer developed pencils to match their pens which had more sophisticated but more effective mechanisms the sales of Eversharp began to slip. By the end of the twenties its position in the industry had deteriorated. The introduction of a range of art deco pens in 1928 and the Doric range in 1931 reversed the trend temporarily, but there was no sense of positive confidence about the operation.

It was failing to match the more aggressive and innovative style of both Parker and Sheaffer.

Sheaffer consolidated its position in the market. Initially it experimented with the large Manifold pen - in 1921 one model was sold at the astonishing price of $8.75 - but in 1924 it majored on the White Dot Lifetime pen. This was a particularly well engineered and attractive product. Its trademark was the white dot inserted either on the tassie of the cap or on the end of the barrel. It came out in many forms during the twenties and thirties, being constantly restyled and improved. It was not phased out until the launch of the Triumph pen in the early forties. Its success enabled Sheaffer to win a growing share of the quality market - in 1925 it claimed that this had reached 25% - mainly at the expense of Waterman and Wahl. As early as 1920 Walter Sheaffer was investing large sums of money in embryo plastics technology but the problems associated with the expansion of the new material under heat resulted in a number of early failures. Ultimately, however, he found solutions to the problems inherent in machining a new product - pyroxylin.

He then negotiated with four 'plastics' manufacturers - DuPont Viscoloid, Fibreloid, Celluloid and Nixon Nitrate. His proposition was clean and simple. If Sheaffer was granted exclusive rights to a new plastic material in all shades of red and green, then he would invest a million dollars in the project and give 25% of his business to each of the four companies. The objective was to switch the fountain pen industry from a reliance on the hard vulcanised rubber - which could be somewhat brittle - to the new plastic pyroxylin for barrels and caps. Pyroxylin was a complex chemical compound of cotton rag tissue paper, acids, camphor and pigments. All four companies signed up.

In December 1924, therefore, Sheaffer took the market by storm with the launch of a new version of the Lifetime pen in an attractive pattern of marbled jade green. The new non-breakable plastic enabled him to guarantee the pen for life. This rang alarm bells at Parker whose large Duofold nibs were only guaranteed for 25 years. Plastic was much lighter and could offer a much wider range of colours and patterns than rubber could ever achieve. It was supplied in bar form which was then cut, drilled, machined and polished according to the specifications of the particular writing instrument. DuPont sold its product under the trade name 'Pyralin'; Sheaffer named the same material 'Radite'. Sheaffer's immediate impact in the market place forced the competition to respond.

At this point DuPont seems to have broken ranks. In spite of the exclusive agreement with Sheaffer, its marketing department subsequently entered into a contract with Parker to supply Pyralin in a shade of lacquer red which was termed 'burnt orange'. This led to the threat of rival law suits since DuPont's obligations were irreconcilable. "Why does this Company have a legal department", moaned Judge Laffey, DuPont's general counsel to Walter Sheaffer, "if they don't consult it..... when breaking a contract? We have to be sued by you or the Parker Pen Company. We understand that your business is increasing and you probably couldn't show the court that our breaking the contract has caused you much damage. If we stopped the other fellow, he could probably show great damage". "He spoke the truth", commented Walter Sheaffer sadly",.....but that shows what business concerns will do under certain circumstances and how they will fail to live up to their solemn agreements". The issue seems to have been resolved in Parker's favour. Desperate to make up lost ground, Parker chose the name 'Permanite'; it was still DuPont's 'Pyralin', the original Pyroxylin.

By the summer of 1926 the new Duofold Senior was launched on to the market in jade green. The pens of the initial launch were not, in fact, termed Duofolds although they were identical in design. They were called Jade Pens, available in all three sizes with matching pencils. In the summer of 1927 the term 'Jade Pen' was dropped and they joined the family of Duofold and carried the Duofold trademark on the barrel. The pencils in this range were the first to be fitted with black trimmed bands at the barrel end - a feature of all subsequent Duofold pencils.

Kenneth Parker's objective was to put the 'non-breakable' image across to the public both quickly and effectively - and to negate the positive marketing advantage that Sheaffer had already achieved. The advertising ballyhoo was enormous fun. Banner headlines in newspapers and magazines were strident:

"NON-BREAKABLE BARRELS - dropped from airplanes - 3,000 feet - without harm!"

and

"HURLED 25 STOREYS TO CEMENT - picked up unbroken!"

and

"OVER THE TIM OF THE GRAND CANYON - struck the jagged rocks
half a mile below - unharmed!"

It was all good stuff.

It is significant that Wahl reacted to this threat by increasing its production of rubber pens; it did not adopt the new material until it introduced its Art Deco range in 1928. Waterman first used it with the launch of the Patrician in 1929. The marketing challenge in the twenties demanded sensitivity to customer preference and quick response. Four or five years was too long.

The introduction of plastics put new life into the Duofold. 1926 was a record year for sales. Thereafter there was a disciplined effort to exploit the colour potential of the new material. In September 1927 two new colours were introduced - mandarin yellow and lapis lazuli blue. The range itself was expanded to include the Special - a pen almost as long as the Senior but of the slimmer girth of the Junior - and the Juniorette. The Juniorette was the Lady Duofold fitted with a clip instead of a chatelaine ring.

In 1928 the caps of the existing range were redesigned. The single wide cap band of the Lady Duofold gave way to three narrow bands. In the autumn the single band of the other models was replaced by two narrow bands. In time to exploit the Christmas trade the Imperial Duofold was launched in an attractive cream plastic, marbled with black veins. The cap featured three gold bands and the nib was inscribed 'De Luxe'.

The pen sold at $10 - a significant price increase - and Parker responded to Sheaffer's earlier challenge by offering a life-time guarantee. (Extended guarantees of this kind may have helped to sell the pen in the first place but they stored up trouble for the future. The public expected the dealers to make their old pens work, whereas the dealers hoped that the customer would buy a new one). This model was subsequently rechristened the Duofold De Luxe.

In the same year the concept of the 'Lucky Curve' was abandoned. It had served the Company handsomely for a generation - but it was a tiresome complication for the repair mechanic. The unique feed had to be inserted into the back end of the section while the nib was installed into the front end. This task was so fiddly that mechanics would sometimes cut off the curved end of the feed, thus simplifying the insertion of the nib-feed assembly. Complaints from the field increased as Duofold sales grew. At length Parker withdrew the curved feed end altogether; from 1928 onwards all replacement feeds had conventional ends. The spear feed feature was retained but the curved internal feed was replaced by a flat one. However, because residual service stocks took some years to exhaust, many Duofolds made before 1928 have modified feed ends and many post 1928 models incorporate the original spear feed with a curved end. The modified spear feeds have a notch in the lower surface. Two notes for the cynical: the Company seem to have carried the 'lucky curve' banner on the barrel imprint for some two years after this design change was implemented. Evidently it still carried some marketing muscle. Secondly, the pens equipped with the new feeds worked just as effectively as the earlier ranges which incorporated the 'lucky curve'. Was the whole design concept of the 'lucky curve' originally a convincing sales gimmick that had no effect on the efficient functioning of the pen?

By 1929 pen designers were coming to appreciate the full potential of the new plastic material. The first advantage of a much wider range of colours and patterns had been exploited from the outset by both Parker and Sheaffer - largely at the expense of Waterman who reacted late. Up to that point most fountain pens were cylindrical in shape, a design largely imposed by the problems of machining hard rubber. Plastic offered more flexibility. By the end of the twenties most manufacturers were developing a fashion for streamlined and tapered pens. Sheaffer again were first in the field with the launch of a streamlined version of the Lifetime pen in the summer of 1929. Waterman fought back with a brand new model, the Patrician - a classic of pen design the qualities of which were never matched by its success in the market place. The Patrician used the new plastic but it did not exploit the new fashion for tapering. Parker streamlined the complete Duofold range in time for the Christmas trade the same year. The timing was awful. The stock market crash had taken place a month earlier.

The new series was essentially a restyling of the proven Duofold range in red, black, jade green, lapis lazuli blue and mandarin yellow. Black and pearl were available in the De Luxe range. The caps were fitted with two narrow bands of equal width. The following year two new colours were introduced - burgundy and black in the standard range with two cap bands and De Luxe modern green and pearl with three bands. A new line was also launched - the Vest Pocket. This was a range of very small pens and pencils.

In 1932 the final colour of a famous line was introduced - a moderne seagreen pearl and black - in the De Luxe range, with three cap bands. A variant of green pearl and black was offered with both two and three cap bands. In the same year the three cap bands of the De Luxe and Lady Duofold were modified. The centre band was made wider than the two outside bands. It is, however, fair to say that the new look Duofolds never took the public's fancy to the same extent as Sheaffer's new Balanced pens.

Nonetheless Parker had earned a strong foothold in the quality pen market. Less successful were the efforts to achieve volume sales among low-priced pens. The first move was the introduction of a black school pen, the Parker D.Q. (Duofold Quality), at $3.50 in 1926. There followed a line of slender pens, each with a matching pencil. They were offered in five delicate shades - coral, beige grey, Naples blue, mauve and magenta. In February 1927 a type of moire pattern was introduced, developing four months' later into a new moire pattern of broken lines. The pencils sported the black bands at both ends of the barrel. In 1928 Parker mounted a further attack on the low-price market with the launch of the 'True Blue' pen at $3.50 with a moderne blue and white design. However none of these initiatives were really successful. The investment did not pay off.

There was a somewhat unusual development in 1926. Parker designed a desk set in which the writing instrument was held in a receptacle which was fixed to a desk unit by a ball and socket. Wahl also developed this idea and Sheaffer claimed rights to certain other features. The three companies could have gone to law to establish the validity of their various patents. Instead they banded together, pooled their rights and patents and set up the Pen Desk Set Company. This company in turn licenced other manufacturers to use the design.

Some years later the Research and Development Department at Janesville had another go at a desk unit. The base was chromium but it had no ball socket. Instead it was equipped with a spring hook into which the clip of the outer cap could be snapped fast. Thus the cap of the pen provided the socket into which the pen could be held. It was named the Pen-Parker and it was heavily advertised in the spring of 1932. Whether it fell victim to the Depression or whether it was a solution looking for a demand, the new desk pen was not a success.

To sum up, therefore, the relative positions of the big four developed like this during the twenties. Waterman started with a significant lead over the rest of the field although it lost ground between 1925 and 1928.

The Patrician, however, enabled it to claw back some of this lead after 1929. Wahl started the decade in second place, thanks to the volume sales of the Eversharp pencil. After 1925, however, it was overtaken first by Parker and then by Sheaffer. The latter forged ahead and by 1930 it was nearly in a position to challenge Waterman for the leadership of the market.

Waterman	over	$8,000,000
Sheaffer		$7,368,700
Parker		$4,622,500
Wahl		$3,724,200

Such was the stage of play when the Depression put each company under stresses that had never been experienced before.

WORLD MARKETS

The first concrete evidence of Parker export sales is an advertisement in 'The Penny Pictorial' of 16 December 1899. This is believed to be the first Parker advertisement to appear in the U.K. The Bulldog Special was certainly on sale in 1903. In that year the first overseas distributor was appointed in Denmark to cover the Scandinavian market. But in the early days there was no management impetus to earn export sales. Parker was fighting for a respectable share of a domestic market.

In the early twenties, however, George Parker left the exploitation of the Duofold in the hands of his sons and subordinates. He packed his trunks and undertook the first of a number of sales journeys around the world, during which he laid the foundations of a network of overseas distributors. He described his method of operation:

"About the time the Duofold came out, I took the first long export trip, getting the nucleus of the business started and planted in London. From there I went down to Italy and established a pretty good agent there, who, by the way, continues up to the present, as far as Mr Mussolini permits the importation of fountain pens into that country.

From there I went over to the Orient, to India. Well do I remember this. You might be interested in knowing how I proceeded. I went to a town like Bombay, for instance. I would first get acquainted with the American Consul. Through the Consul I would get acquainted with the bankers and the businessmen. I would stay in the city long enough to get the atmosphere, so to speak, and by the time I got through I pretty nearly had the idea whom to sell.

"I did this in Bombay, Calcutta, Ceylon and eventually in Java, Australia, China and the Philippines. The contacts I made in these days have resulted in very pleasant business recollections. I have kept pretty closely in touch with people who favoured me with their business in those early days, and, if I do say it, I think it would be pretty hard for a competitor to come along and rout us out. I have been told some of these people say, 'Well, Mr Parker came here to see me some years ago and we know him, and he makes a good fountain pen, so I guess we will continue to handle his goods'. That makes it pretty tough for the competition; but we feel we are entitled to it, so long as we treat the customer well and give him the best there is on the market".

By 1926 the increase in overseas sales justified the setting up of a specialist Export Department at Janesville and the appointment of a Manager of Export Sales.

A key initiative was the establishment of a factory in Canada. A wholly owned subsidiary company was set up in September 1923; it manufactured Parker pens from a rented production unit in Toronto. They were sold through its own sales force throughout Canada. In 1932 the company purchased a modern plant on University Avenue. In the early days it prospered on the wave of the Duofold, but the Depression hit it hard and it did not recover with the resilience of the parent company. In 1935 the Managing Director, Victor Smith resigned and Roy Pennington, hitherto a Wahl company executive, succeeded him. By the mid thirties the Canadian Company had improved both its volume of sales and its quality standards.

THE NATURAL CONSERVATISM OF THE ENGLISH

QUINK

An effective ink must possess a range of essential properties, some of which in practice conflict with each other. It must leave a well-defined line on the paper which does not spread or 'feather'. It must flow easily and smoothly from the pen and must never congeal on the nib causing it to clog or - as in the eighteen thirties - to corrode. Ink must dry out as soon as it is laid on the paper and, once dry, it must leave a tackless film which does not subsequently smear or smudge. A colour must retain its intensity and not deteriorate or fade in time. It must remain stable in solution; the development of a sediment limits the bottle's shelf life and arouses exasperation in use. It must stay fresh; an offensive smell throws a doubt on all the other qualities that the ink may have. These basic specifications have been the goal since the Chinaman first shaped a bambo pen or the Egyptian scribe chewed his first reed brush.

George Parker marketed ink under his own name from before the First World War. He adopted his usual approach by launching a specific product at every market group which he could identify. Parker's Bankers' Safety Ink was 'worth its weight in gold to any careful prudent business man who has in his keeping valuable papers'. It contained no acid, so no acid could erase it. It sold at 6 cents a pint or a dollar a quart. The Traveller's Ink bottle, on the other hand, was fitted in a handsome polished wooden cylinder with a screw top. 'It takes the eye of everyone'. Larger markets were served by Parker's Writing Fluid ($7.80 per dozen quarts) or more expensively by the Combined Writing and Copying Fluid ($9 per dozen quarts). Both were 'made from the purest chemicals' - though the precise nature of these chemicals is no longer known. The only colours on offer seem to have been blue, black and red. General office needs were met by Parker's 'Pure Mucilage', office paste and liquid glue. Parker's 'Ivory Paste' was sold for mounting photographs. One intriguing speciality was Parker's Magic or Invisible Ink. It was, his advertisements conceded, 'a good deal of a novelty.....yet it has quite a sale'. 'A sheet can be written and no one be aware of its contents, unless the sheet is heated - when the writing appears'. It sold at 25 cents a bottle.

A modern fountain pen ink must meet more demanding requirements. Firstly, a pen must lay ink on the paper at the first attempt even though it has been left uncapped and the ink has dried on the nib. Secondly, the internal surfaces of the internal ink control mechanism must be readily and consistently 'wettable' by the ink. Thirdly, any fountain pen is prone to blockage and malfunction if the ink contains an appreciable amount of undissolved matter.

In 1922 Sheaffer made a significant step towards the achievement of this ideal. 'Skrip' is generally agreed to be the first modern ink. It was the product of many months of expensive research - which included a not unexpected share of setbacks - undertaken in a basement laboratory at the Morrison Plow Works in Iowa. When it hit the market it was immediately perceived to be a much better product than those of its competitors. Its success was instantaneous.

In the middle twenties a Mr Sayler had begun to research a new writing fluid in the Miner Laboratories. Subsequently he transferred to the Parker Experimental Department at Janesville. It is said that he developed and tested one thousand and twenty different formulae before he produced an ink that met the specifications that had been laid down.

The ability of the pen to write at the first attempt, even though it had been left with its cap off, was achieved by the addition of a solvent. This was designed to prevent the complete drying up of the ink on the nib. As the water in the ink evaporated, sufficient of the non-drying solvent remained to form a soft paste-like deposit at the point of the nib. This deposit would be cleared at the next writing stroke. This entailed striking precisely the right balance. There had to be sufficient solvent of the right composition to do the job but not so much that it prevented the ink from drying virtually instantaneously on the paper or - worse still - to cause the ink to spread or feather.

The internal mechanisms that control the flow of ink from the reservoir to the point of the nib are normally made of plastic. Very few plastics are readily 'wettable' after moulding - and the internal components of a Parker pen offer no exception. They require various forms of pretreatment or surface modification before the ink can flow evenly and consistently over these surfaces and into the fine channels, engineered very precisely, that control the flow of ink to the business end of the pen. Quink and its successor, Super Quink, contain a particular combination of solvents that ensures that these internal components retain their special surface finish by a gentle etching action. This enables the pen to function effectively throughout its life.

The old dip pen inks all suffered sediment problems. Quink was formulated so that it would not throw down a sediment even after years of storage. Scrupulous filtration techniques were incorporated in the manufacturing process to remove any material from the ingredients that had not completely dissolved. The iron contents of the permanent blue, the blue-black and the black no longer took the form of iron sulphate but was a complex inorganic compound which resisted the slow oxidisation of the iron salts - the usual cause of the formation of sediment. (Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages in England and Wales are required by law to use a dip pen ink rich in iron. Its composition is laid down in British Standard 3484 (1962) - 'specification for blue-black record inks'.
The reason for the heavy iron content is to minimise the possibility of forgery or erasure. The problem is that oxidisation slowly sets in on exposure to the air, a process which steadily robs the ink of its iron content to a degree which can put the permanence of the entry at risk. Registrars are therefore required to open a new bottle every January and to throw the old one away, sediment and all). Dyes and other materials used in Quink and Super Quink formulations were only accepted once their compatibility with the total ink formula had been proven by long term storage trials and by accelerated storage tests.

In the summer of 1931 Parker launched Quink laying a heavy emphasis on its pen cleaning properties in its advertising. That autumn Duofold pen and pencil sets were despatched to dealers in a specially designed Christmas pack. Each contained a free sample bottle of Quink.

This marketing tactic was designed firstly to maintain and increase Parker sales against the sagging backcloth of the Depression and secondly to introduce the new product to the public. As an additional marketing ploy the ink was scented. Some 558,000 Duofold sets were sold that Christmas - a present help in time of great trouble.

The formulations of both Quink and then Super Quink have been constantly reviewed and improved over the last fifty years as new dyes have come onto the market and new manufacturing processes have been developed. However, any ink is a compromise. There will probably never be a perfect ink simply because pens are required to write on so many different qualities of paper. A heavily filled or glazed paper will require a higher solvent content to 'wet' the paper consistently. A very cheap paper cannot take ink of any sort - indeed even a ball pen ink will sometimes feather on some papers used in exercise books issued in schools. Super Quink is formulated for use on good quality writing papers - and that itself is a constraint. The day when a fountain pen ink can be used on any writing surface has not yet dawned. Even special papers can cause problems. The original copies of Acts of Parliament are printed on hand-made paper of superb quality, made to exacting specifications. The action of a fountain pen nib tends to pick up the fibres lying on the surface of the papers, leading in turn to a smeared signature. The time may yet come when the Royal Assent is given with a Roller Ball.....

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENTS

Hitherto the ownership of the Parker Pen Company remained in the hands of the men who had founded and developed it. In 1928, however, Bill Palmer was preparing for his retirement. He sold 75% of his stockholding to A. G. Becker and Co., the investment banking house of Chicago. They in turn arranged for Parker to be listed on the Chicago Stock Exchange and offered the Palmer shares to the public.

In consequence the board was restructured. Among the new faces were Howell Murray of A. G. Becker and Co., Charles Pearce, formerly President of Colgate Palmolive and Bruce Jeffris. The latter was the son of a local banker who had supported the Company in its early days. He himself joined Parker at the age of twenty five, having served as a naval officer in the First World War. For several years he had assisted Russell Parker in the management of the plant and personnel in the role of Comptroller. He now achieved his seat on the board and replaced Bill Palmer as Treasurer. His appointment was crucial. Within a few months the Depression was to bite and the management of the Company's finances was going to make greater demands and to require more flexibility and expertise than ever before in its history. Bruce Jeffris subsequently became Vice President, President and Chairman of the Board when Kenneth Parker retired in 1960.

Both Mr Palmer and Mr Blackman then retired. The latter was replaced as General Sales Manager by W. L. Clark, the Manager of the Chicago Division. The latter soon made a radical decision: to discontinue the sale of Parker pens to wholesalers. Wholesalers had been taking over a million dollars of business each year - some 18% of the total turnover. Parker's own sales force was therefore required not only to fulfil their own quotas - plus the customary increase - but also to match all that the wholesalers had sold the previous year. It was a good decision; the sales force met the challenge. The direct impact of the Parker representative on the Parker retailer was an important element in strengthening the Company's image in the market place. In the quality market this was a vital part of the strategy; at the cheaper end it was, of course, less important. Throughout the thirties a succession of surveys evidence the growth and maintenance of the position of the Parker name in American public preference.

W. L. Clark resigned before the Depression had bottomed out. Kenneth Parker assumed the responsibility for the management of sales in addition to his advertising role until the appointment of C. L. Frederick who had previously been General Sales Manager of Colgate Palmolive. His appointment was a significant achievement for Kenneth Parker because he had played an important part in the tremendous expansion of that company in the pharmaceutical/cosmetic/toiletries field. He was an experienced manager of a nationwide sales force of several hundred representatives and he was respected as one of the most able figures in the selling world. The death of Russell Parker was a shattering blow to the family and to the Company. Russell had been with Parker for eighteen years during which he had become responsible for all functions in the operation apart from research and development, marketing and sales - these were Kenneth's concerns. His main responsibility was for production. He earned respect for the effective way in which he controlled inventories and purchases.

Perhaps his most important contribution was the degree of trust that he inspired on the shop floor. He managed the factory in a very personal style, based on a warm-hearted and genuine interest in every member of the work force. He combined this warmth for people with a practical, even stern, business sense - and the work force appreciated this. When Bill Palmer retired he was appointed a Vice President and had become his father's second in command.

Russell fell ill in December 1932, soon after he had managed the Vacumatic into production. Early in January he died. It is said that nothing in George Parker's whole lifetime affected him so deeply. He was a changed and saddened man. He retired the same year.

THE DEPRESSION

The Wall Street crash of 1929 and the subsequent impact of the Depression took America by surprise. It could not have come at a worse time for Parker. The Duofold was growing tired. Cosmetic improvements had been astonishingly successful in maintaining sales but they held out no promise of growth in the long term. The market situation demanded a new model - but the Depression was a wretched time in which to launch one. The extent of the damage to sales turnover can be measured:

Year	Turnover	Per Cent
1929	$5,686,918	100
1930	$4,300,540	76
1931	$3,020,212	53
1932	$1,831,118	32

A drop to 76% in 1930 meant that profits were halved. Thereafter they disappeared altogether. George Parker developed two objectives during the Depression:

1. To relieve distress by keeping Parker employees in work

2. To maintain Parker's position both in the pen market and in public awareness

To achieve continuity of employment, the Company introduced new lines at prices lower than had ever been acceptable before. The Parkette pen sold at $1.25; its matching pencil cost 75 cents; the Parkette De Luxe and the Challenger made their appearance. They were expedients to cope with the Depression - though they subsequently made large sales. To achieve the second, Parker continued a policy of vigorous advertising though the volume had to be curtailed. At a time when some of its competitors virtually ceased to advertise, Parker's front page advertisements every four weeks in the Saturday Evening Post sounded a note of defiance in a demoralised world.

But the climb out of the slough was a desperately slow business. Although Parker was back in profit in 1933 it was not until 1941 that sales turnover approached anywhere near its 1929 figure. Nevertheless Parker's response to the test was a significant comment on the culture of the Company at that time.

The Depression hit the quality pen manufacturers particularly hard. Only the strongest could survive in these conditions. Many well-established manufacturers, such as Aiken Lambert, Carter, Century, Conklin, Grieshaber, Le Boeug, Nardi and Snell, either folded or sold out to the larger companies. Companies became desperate and sought salvation in gimmick solutions. Conklin initiated this phase with an elegant development - the Nozac (no sack) pen. This was a brave move but it did not pack sufficient marketing muscle to save the Company. Waterman introduced the 'tip-fill' system of filling. Eversharp launched the 'adjustable point' pen, the nib of which could be set to one of nine different thicknesses of line.

Sheaffer sales held up well until 1931 when they dropped off sharply. Its workforce went on to a three day week, interrupted by a period of complete closure. Both Waterman and Wahl were very seriously weakened. Sales figures alone do not tell the full story; more significant was the impact on the companies themselves. By the end of the thirties Parker led the industry in terms of sales; its assets were only slightly less than their value in 1929. Sheaffer was second in net sales but had over a million dollars less in assets. Waterman was now third and gave every appearance of running out of steam. Its assets were less than 60% of their 1929 value. Wahl was in bottom place and in considerable trouble, with little more than half its 1929 assets. Even the launch of the Eversharp Doric range - one of the most beautiful writing instruments of all time - would not reverse the trend.

Thus Parker was hurt - but its competitors were hurt more. One reason for its comparative success in such a slough of despond lay in a range of new models. The Research and Development Department had been engineering a new sacless filling mechanism based on patents developed by Professor Dahlberg at Wisconsin University. Nearly five years' work was committed to the project - together with $125,000 of precious capital - before it was ready for the market and a launch could be scheduled. A small pilot study was then undertaken. Sixty hand-made models of the new Parker vacuum filler were placed in a stationery store in Chicago to test the market. Although the sweltering summer of 1932 was not the most propitious time in which to carry out such research, the number of vacuum fillers sold in one week equalled the total pen sales in this store for the preceding month. The new model got the green light.

One marketing problem remained. Dealers throughout the world held large stocks of Duofolds. They were likely to stay on the shelves in stagnant trading conditions. These stocks would limit the dealers' ability to buy the new model and would extend the time in which the Duofold could be phased out. A simple problem demanded a simple solution. National magazines and leading newspapers ran large advertisements in 1932:

OLD PENS AND PENCILS ACCEPTED FOR CASH
toward the famous Parker Duofold

or

WE'LL GIVE YOU UP TO $2.50 FOR AN OLD PEN ANY MAKE
toward a brand new Parker Duofold

The plan worked well. Stocks were substantially reduced and the dealers themselves were credited by means of discounts off their initial orders for vacuum fillers. In December 1932 through to February 1933 further stock reductions were achieved by a special offer of a free Duofold pencil with every Duofold pen purchased.

THE VACUMATIC 1932-1936

"This marvellous pen", proclaimed the advertisements, "is the goal sought by pen makers for two generations. It is George S. Parker's masterpiece - the crowning achievement of his long career as the world's leading pen maker".

Kenneth Parker had long maintained that the rubber sac and pressure bar system - the standard filling system of the day - was a flawed design. The ink sac itself took up a lot of the space in the barrel of the pen and therefore reduced its ink capacity. The corrosive action of the ink was bound to result in the failure of the ink sac in time. The advantages of the traditional method were that it was cheap and reliable in the short term.

The Vacuum Filler embodied several original features, some of which were based on the Dahlberg patent. The most important was the fact that the ink reservoir was no longer a sac contained within the barrel, but the barrel itself. This meant that the Vacumatic held just over twice as much ink at each filling as did the Duofold. This was a significant benefit to the customer for the pen required filling much less frequently.

A blind cap at the end of the barrel concealed a plunger; the plunger operated a simple recoil diaphragm. Each downward stroke of the plunger expelled some of the air from the barrel. This air was forced through a breather tube inserted into the back end of the feed, through an airhole and the wide channel in the feed itself until it escaped between the feed and the nib. As the air was forced out of the barrel and bubbled away into the bottle of ink so a vacuum was formed when the plunger was released. Ink was then drawn up through the wide channel of the feed and through the breather tube into the reservoir - the barrel. As soon as the level of ink in the barrel reached the top of the breather tube the filling cycle was complete. This entailed operating the plunger ten times. Initially the diaphragm was made of rubber but later neoprene was used. This gave a much more reliable performance.

Apart from the greater ink capacity this design had certain functional advantages. Firstly, the ink was metered to the point of the nib more precisely; it followed an independent path through the breather tube and a continuous and consistent flow of ink was achieved by means of capilliary cuts in the feed bar. Secondly, the Vacumatic had no pressure bar or similar moving part that could fail in use. Thirdly there was no rubber sac which was always liable to tear or perish. Nevertheless it was an untested solution, a radical departure from previous designs. The future of the Company depended on its effectiveness.

In appearance the Vacuum Filler was a handsome instrument; its styling was as innovative as its mechanism. The launch model was made of a unique laminated plastic with alternating layers of black and silver pearl. A more conservative all-black version was also produced. The aluminium plunger which operated the filling mechanism could be locked in the down position with a slight twist. It was concealed by a half-inch screw-on blind cap. The pen's section and blind barrel cap were fashioned, not of hard rubber, but of the same silver and jet laminate. It featured the famous 'arrow' clip for the first time. This was designed by Joseph Platt, a talented New York artist, whom Kenneth Parker had commissioned.

The choice of the arrow motif seems to have been dictated by no other consideration than its shape in relation to the functional requirements of an effective clip. (Subsequently, of course, this theme was carried forward into Parker's corporate logo). The nib was a particular feature. It was made of gold and incorporated the arrow in gold set off against a platinum plated background. It carried the inscription 'USA/PARKER'. The nib was guaranteed to give twenty-five years' of 'perfect writing service' The metal trim of the laminated version was chrome plated - the first time Parker had used this material. The fittings on the black model were gold filled.

The launch model was made only in one size - the equivalent to what was later to be known as the Standard Vacumatic. It was matched by a pencil which had a twist-action propel-repel mechanism. As we have seen the initial test shipment was sold out within a week.

Never was a new model launched with so little fanfare or ceremony. In the autumn and winter of 1932 many thousand were shipped out to retailers with no advertising whatsoever. The whole advertising budget was devoted to clearing the old Duofold stocks off the shelves. The build up of the new Vacuum Filler stocks was achieved quietly, with a minimum of fuss.

The new pen was at last unveiled in a full page advertisement in the Saturday Evening Post on 19th March 1933. The pen sold at $7.50 - only fifty cents higher than the launch price of the Duofold eleven years earlier. The matching pencil was priced at $3.50. This was the start of an aggressive and highly successful advertising campaign. Although all the early Vacuum Fillers were made of an opaque plastic, a transparent-barrelled model was supplied to retailers to enable potential customers to see for themselves how the novel filling system actually worked.

In June a Junior model was introduced, priced at $5.00; its matching pencil cost $2.50. In July the somewhat stolid name 'Vacuum Filler' was abandoned; it became the more punchy 'Vacumatic'. The advertising was powerful and comprehensive. The objective was to get advertisements for the Vacumatic or for Quink into 90% of all American homes. The message majored on '102% more ink capacity than a conventional pen of equal size' and 'the miracle two-way writing point'. In the next six months Parker sales rose by 32%.

By February 1934 the 'visible ink supply' feature was introduced. The barrels were now made 'transparent' by laminating a coloured plastic with an amber transparent plastic. The pen barrel appeared opaque but, when held up to the light, the amount of ink held in the reservoir could be seen. The other parts of the pen, such as the cap, the blind barrel cap and the section, were made from a matching opaque laminate of coloured and black plastic. The black version at this date featured clear plastic panels which ran along the length of the barrel to give the same facility. The visible ink supply was such a popular feature that by August 1934 the opaque models were discontinued. Imitation implies flattery. Within three years Sheaffer, Conklin and Wahl-Eversharp had all developed models of their own with transparent barrels.

The product range in 1934 consisted of two distinct series of pens. The more expensive line included the original 'standard' model at $7.50, an 'oversize' model, introduced early in 1934, at $10.00 and a new 'slender' pen at $7.50. These top line models featured three cap bands. They were offered in silver/pearl laminate, black and - a new introduction - burgundy/pearl laminate. They were all equipped with the impressive gold and platinum nib. Mechanical pencils to match either the Standard or the Slender pen were priced at $2.50. (The pencils were in fact advertised as Standard and Oversize - but the measurements of the latter fitted the Slender. No companion pencil to the Oversize pen was offered initially. As a further variation on a theme the medical profession was catered for; a thermometer could be supplied in a silver pearl case which matched the Standard pen and pencil.

The Junior Vacumatic line differed from the more expensive models not only by price and size but also by design and finish. The product line consisted of the Junior Vacumatic pen and a Slender Junior Vacumatic, both priced at $5.00 and a pencil at $2.50. The colours available in 1934 were opaque black and three newly introduced transparent models - grey marbled, burgundy marbled and crystal. The transparent marbling effect on the barrels was achieved by embedding chips of silver-grey or burgundy in a transparent amber background. The caps and blind barrel caps were of matching but opaque marbled plastic, but the section and the jewel on the cap and barrel ends were black. The crystal model had a transparent barrel with a black cap, section and blind cap - it looked exactly like a dealer's demonstration pen. The Junior range was fitted with a simple gold nib stamped 'PARKER VACUMATIC/ MADE IN USA', as opposed to the two-tone nib of the top line range.

At the bottom of the range the Parker Challenger was offered in two sizes - standard and slender - and in four colours - black, burgundy, grey and green. The pens cost $2.50 and the matching pencil $1.25. The Parkette De Luxe appeared in the same sizes and colours. It cost $1.75 and $1.25 respectively. The basic Parkette in the same colours was only made in the standard size at $1.25; the pencil sold at 75 cents. The Parkette was the only Parker model that used a lever filling system.

Desk sets were obviously less important. The Duofold bases were carried forward unchanged into 1933 and 1934. The familiar trumpet-shaped pen holder with two gold-filled bands near the bottom was retained. An ordinary Vacumatic was converted into a desk pen by the simple expedient of replacing the blind barrel cap with a black Duofold-style desk taper. No new design initiatives here.

National advertising accelerated. In the autumn of 1934 Parker took space in 17 national newspapers, 155 metropolitan newspapers and 226 college papers. The Vacumatic was endorsed in a popular newspaper feature, Ripley's 'Believe It or Not'. During 1933 of every dollar spent on the national advertising of fountain pens, Parker's share was 41.8 cents. The following year this proportion increased to 49.8 cents. This was more than three times the budget of its nearest competitor. The belief in the effectiveness of consistent comprehensive advertising is a continuing thread through Parker's early history. This was coupled to a powerful impact at point of sale. A store display stand was developed to sell Quink. It was a gold and silver foil construction, illuminated by flashing electric lights.

The 'Vacumatic Motion Display' was based on three printed panels, fitted with moving parts to catch the eye of potential customers. When the Recording and Statistical Corporation undertook a poll of Saturday Evening Post readers in 1934, 47% of respondents said that they would choose a Parker as their next pen. This was more than twice the number who selected the next most popular brand. Sales of Quink rose by 104% between 1933 and 1934 giving Parker the dominant share of that market. By November 1935 Parker sales of writing instruments was twice the figure achieved in 1932.

In 1935 a new colour, emerald pearl, was added to the top line range. The longtitudunally-striped black pen was replaced by a black laminated version. A true Oversize pencil was introduced to accompany the Oversize pen and the prices of the Standard and the Slender pencils were increased from $2.50 to $3.50. An emerald green marble pattern was offered in the Junior Vacumatic range and the somewhat old fashioned nib was replaced by one which more closely resembled that of the top line range. It embodied the arrow motif; it was somewhat smaller in size and it lacked the platinum plating. The Vacumatic desk set was completely redesigned. The new model was made in a black plastic, instead of hard rubber and the lower half of the holder was chrome-plated as were the ball and socket. In addition to the marble and onyx Parker also offered bases in plastic laminates which matched the barrels of the Vacumatics. The desk pen themselves, however, were still the standard pocket models fitted with black tapers.

In 1936 the top line range was increased with the introduction of the 'Senior'. This model was the same length as the Oversize and was fitted with an Oversize nib but it was more slender. As with the other models the cap was fitted with three gold bands, but the Senior's cap rings were of unequal width. A wide middle band was flanked by two much narrower bands. This was almost a throwback to the last of the stream-lined Duofolds; the 1936 Senior is unique in this respect. The Senior sold at $10.00. A new colour was also introduced into the top line range - golden pearl laminate. The inscription stamped on the nib also underwent a minor 'modification'. Nibs had previously carried a small 'USA' above 'Parker'; now the two lines were transposed.

The Junior Vacumatic product line was increased by two new colours. The first was a transparent black which replaced the opaque black of previous years. Unlike the more expensive laminated black pens the Junior version featured a barrel with a dense network of fine reticular lines set in a transparent plastic. The second was a very distinctive pattern, known variously as golden pearl, brown pearl or golden web. It had the appearance of small golden rectangular bricks set in black mortar in a regular pattern. The 'mortar' of the barrel and the cap was actually a transparent amber plastic so the pen retained its 'visible ink' feature. The blind barrel cap was black instead of being made of the same material as the rest of the pen.

Parker continued to dominate the fountain pen advertising. During the first five months of 1936 Parker's advertising expenditure was greater than that of all its competitors combined and more than three times higher than its closest rival. That autumn it produced the most striking point of sale display yet. An advertising board measuring 34 inches high by 33 inches wide consisted of three panels. The centre display was headlined 'Parker Vacumatic'.

Below three banners punched home the messages 'visible ink supply', 'holds 102% more ink' and 'scratch proof point'. Flanking the centre panel were four Vacumatic pens, each some 2½ feet high. The entire display was brilliantly printed in seven colours and the panels were fitted with translucent sections, lit from behind with synchronised flashing lights. Thousands of these displays were made up and shipped to retailers across America, free of charge.

There was one other somewhat bizarre innovation. In 1935 there appeared the Vacumatic holy water sprinkler. This was supplied in black or emerald green laminate. It cost $5.00. To outward appearance it appeared to be an ordinary Standard Vacumatic pen except for the barrel inscription which read 'Parker/Holy Water Sprinkler'. The filling mechanism was identical. However it had no nib or feed; when the cap was removed a small nozzle was revealed through which the holy water was dispensed. A small gold cross was set in the tassie - a sensible precaution if the faithful were not to be spattered with Quink. "Already a large number of these sprinklers have been sold in all parts of the world", the Parkergram told dealers in August 1935, "Our London Office, for instance, just told us that they had an enquiry from Ireland for five gross...Wherever there is a Catholic Church there is a market for the sprinklers. Many Catholic families are provided with Holy Water in the home....so the use of these sprinklers is not confined solely to priests".

THE DEATH OF GEORGE PARKER

George Parker died during the morning of Monday 19th July, 1937 at Billings Hospital, Chicago. That evening the Janesville Gazette printed his obituary:

"On November 23, 1892, he married Martha M Clemens and they were the parents of three children, Russell C., an executive of The Parker Pen Company, who died in January, 1933; Kenneth S. now president of the company; and Virginia, now Mrs Gerald A Bate, Ottawa, Canada.

Besides his widow and two children, Mr Parker is survived by a sister, Mrs Alice Scott, Irvington, N.J.; and five grandchildren, Patricia, George and Danny Parker, Janesville, and Martha and Peter Bate, Ottawa, Canada.

As a manufacturer, Mr Parker was a most unusual man dealing with his employees. Despite the tremendous growth in the business and the consequent increase in number of workers he maintained a personal interest and contact with all of them. He knew their personal likes and dislikes, and was also acquainted with their families.

In 1930 he built the Parker clubhouse as a means of providing more enjoyment for employees, and in 1935 erected Camp Cherio at Stonehenge, a summer cottage along the bluffs of Rock River for outings of employees, Boy and Girl Scout groups, and others.

'It is my earnest wish', said Mr Parker upon completion of the Parker clubhouse 'to share the blessings God has given me with my helpers, in order that they may enjoy some of the refinements of life which they might not otherwise have'.

It was this kindly trait of character as much as any other that made him universally beloved by his employees. The clubhouse has become one of the most popular recreation spots in the city, and is used extensively for parties, dances, concerts, lectures, and other activities. It is attractively furnished, many of the articles being prized possessions of Mr Parker, collected on his travels through many foreign countries, particularly in the Orient. He was considered an authority on ivories, and had one of the finest collections of ivory in the middle west. His home at 805 Court Street, and also Stonehenge, are richly furnished with collections of Chinese iron pictures, cloisonne and many other articles gathered in the Orient.

One of the institutions in which Mr Parker had maintained a most active interest for many years was Mercy Hospital where he served as chairman of the board of directors. There he maintained the Parker room, of which any employee may have the use for a small weekly fee. He also made many gifts to the hospital, including the latest type hospital beds and new beds in the wards, the latter his most recent gift. He also financed the repainting of the Sisters' home last year. One of his hobbies that gave untold pleasure to hundreds was his sending of flowers to friends and mere acquaintances from his town house conservatory and Stonehenge. Throughout his own illness he sent personal messages of appreciation to all who sent him flowers, cards and letters.

Always interested in students and young people, he established and maintained for several years a system of monthly awards to outstanding students of the high school. He also made gifts at various times to the police and fire departments, and was always the first to give recognition to any meritorious service on the part of any of the members of these departments.

One of his greatest enjoyments in life was travelling, and he had probably visited more foreign countries than any man in the state. His trips to all corners of the world served a double purpose; not only did he obtain pleasure from them, but at the same time developed the export business of the Parker plant to a remarkable extent. He was a most interesting conversationalist and a keen observer, and made hundreds of friends on his world travels.

A much more personal note was struck by one of his oldest and closest friends, the great American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. Four days later he wrote a tribute in which the essence of the man shines through:

"George Parker of Janesville was laid away in the Oak Hill Cemetery yesterday. Such a man as he is sure of an impressive funeral in our country - but his was very simple except for the number of people gathered about him and the great masses of gorgeous flowers that piled up where he was. George Parker was an Episcopalian. But, as the cars of the funeral procession passed by Mercy Hospital where they had cared for him while he was ill, lined up by the roadside there stood the black robed Mother Superior and her black robed assistants, flanked by long rows of white robed nurses, each side. The row of bowed heads seemed a block long as the mortal remains of the man they were honouring - because they loved him - passed by. Because I loved him too, their affectionate gesture touched me as no funeral could. It was impossible to put a tag on him you see.

This friend of mine was so warm in spirit that people seemed to love him automatically. He was handsome and so much alive, that he is going to seem the more dear to most of us. Our country hasn't many of his type left. They are the best argument I know for our social system as it stands.

From the time he sat behind his favourite horse on the race track of the Janesville County Fair until he became an international figure in American Industry he was a "good sport" as we say. America considers that the first condition of the True American Gentleman - and it is. Just as it is the first condition of one in England. He became a great traveller, always curious. He got about a lot in far away places, not omitting the dangerous Yangste in China - and the ideal mate for him, his wife Martha, was never very far away from George. I imagine he was what we call a selfmade man. But, as his friends knew, he was not a selfish one.

By instinct he was a patron with strong likes and dislikes and salty tastes. He was a success in the best sense of that equivocal term in our country. What is America going to do without him and his kind? They are fast falling away from us - these grand fellows - developed in personality and correlation by their own resourcefulness - leaving their beloved sons and daughters, who have had no such luck, to 'carry on'....."

George Parker's widow, Martha, died in May 1968.

Appendix I

WRITING INSTRUMENTS AT THE BANK OF ENGLAND: 1793-1911

The quill pens were supplied by the firm of Walsh at least until the end of the 1820's. At the end of the period they were supplied by Henry Hill & Sons Ltd.

The Patent pens were marketed by Joseph Bramah and were based on the patent which he registered in September 1809. The quill nibs were cut to shape and the slits were cracked on a V-shaped knife tool mounted in a fly press.

The steel nibs were those marketed by Gillott and cost 3s.9d a gross in 1844.

Cost				Number of pens issued			Total staff Employed
Year	Quill £	Patent £	Steel £	Quill	Patent	Steel	
1793	1,206	-	-	-	-	-	-
1800	2,233	-	-	-	-	-	672
1810	2,417	-	-	1,513,675	-	-	897
1820	2,021	-	-	1,260,725	-	-	1,002
1822	769	405	-	424,475	182,700	-	-
1830	232	425	-	50,925	401,500	-	874
1831	182	345	20	47,559	325,800	-	-
1836	223	282	54	53,250	268,200	14,532	-
1840	197	80	313	68,350	109,500	59,565	871
1845	72	15	153	63,775	22,000	81,144	-
1846	107	-	174	Detailed accounts cease			
1850	89	-	152				892
1860	27	-	151				922
1870	7	-	124				978
1880	13	-	87				1,144
1890	61	-	151				1,357
1900	32	-	133				1,311
1910	-	-	117				1,401
1911	-	-	124				-
Detailed accounts cease							

Appendix II

SALES OF THE DUOFOLD: 1921-1942

The Duofold was first introduced in the Chicago Tribune in March 1922. The retail price was $7.50

In April 1922, the Duofold DeLuxe and Duofold Junior DeLuxe were introduced, and the Chinese Red colour first appeared.

Year	Unit Duofold Sales	Total Parker Sales $ (All Products)
1921	12,581	1,240,000
1922	323,214	2,042,000
1923	741,739	3,436,160
1924	1,075,050	4,718,826
1925	1,075,356	4,923,290
1926	1,204,534	5,387,796
1927	1,228,360	4,972,909
1928	1,192,393	5,285,249
1929	1,124,824	5,686,918
1930	887,189	4,300,540
1931	584,897	3,020,212
1932	266,826	1,831,118
1933	126,428	2,203,281
1934	72,939	3,105,015
1935	32,939	3,815,195
Sub total	9,949,051	54,728,509
Revived 1939-1942	412,200	
TOTAL	10,361,251	

Appendix III

SALES OF THE VACUMATIC: 1933-1949

The Vacumatic was first introduced in March 1933 in the Saturday Evening Post. It sold at $8.75 and $10 retail.

Three other products were launched that year to fight the Depression. They were: the Parkette (retail $1.75) and the Challenger (retail $2.50 and $5.00)

Year	Unit Vacumatic Sales	Total Parker Sales $ (All Products)
1933	150,478	2,203,281
1934	248,865	3,105,015
1935	322,816	3,815,195
1936	415,591	4,612,056
1937-38	392,118	4,815,104
1938-39	336,136	3,950,962
1939-40	305,537	4,322,628
1940-41	362,731	5,428,846
1941-42	469,695	8,761,342
1942-43	737,595	9,955,179
1943-44	707,336	12,875,861
1944-45	616,336	15,098,821
1945-46	950,539	21,297,003
1946-47	482,003	30,899,338
1947-48	308,766	33,125,934
1948-49	13,876	23,035.284
TOTAL	6,820,418	187,302,849

Appendix IV

SALES OF THE "51": 1941-1953

The "51" was first introduced in 1941. Its retail price was $12.50

Year	Unit "51" Sales	Total Parker Sales $ (All Products)
1940-41	6,236	5,428,846
1941-42	214,163	8,761,342
1942-43	384,512	9,955,179
1943-44	440,645	12,875,861
1944-45	471,904	15,098,821
1945-46	1,035,368	21,297,003
1946-47	2,109,797	30,899,338
1947-48	2,007,025	33,125,934
1948-49	1,774,191	23,036,284
1949-50	1,020,672	17,886,680
1950-51	1,046,523	23,773,552
1951-52	1,160,632	24,417,926
1952-53 (9 months)	1,026,393	16,575,718
TOTAL	12,698,061	243,132,484

Appendix V

A CHRONICLE OF MAJOR PARKER PRODUCTS

1888-1982

1888		- George S Parker developed his own fountain pen
1889	10 December	- The first patent for Parker's new pen and ink feed was registered
1890	18 March	- an over-under feed was patented
1891		- W F Palmer and George Parker entered into a partnership as the sole owners
1891	30 June	- An improved over-feed was patented
1892	February	- The Parker Pen Company was incorporated
1893	12 December	- a feed resembling the Lucky Curve was patented
1894	04 December	- The Lucky Curve feed was patented
1898	28 June	- A slip-fit outer cap was patented
1899	04 April	- The Jointless pen was patented
1900	17 July	- Gold filigree "Lucky Curve" pens introduced. A taper on the inside of the outer cap was patented to make the cap fit more securely
1903		- A vest pocket pen called the Bulldog Special was introduced
1904	03 May	- The first mechanically filled Parker was patented
1905	03 January	- A patent for the spear-head feed was applied for
1906		- The Emblem pens for secret orders were introduced
1907	27 May	- The level lock clip was patented - The No.37 Sterling Silver Snake Pen introduced - The No.38 18K Solid Gold Snake Pen introduced
1911	25 April	- An improved Lucky Curve feed was patented

1912	June	- The first safety cap was patented. Later used in the Jack-Knife pen
1914		- The Black Giant and Red Giant pens were introduced
1916	05 September	- The button filler was introduced - The Ivorine line of pens made from milk curd were introduced - The Jack-Knife Safety pen with a transparent barrel made of bakelite was introduced - The washer pocket clip was patented
1918		- The Safety filled filter was introduced
1920		- Parker introduced its first mechanical pencil
1921	22, 26, 30 November and 3, 8, 14, 17, 20, 22 December	- The Duofold pen was advertised in the Chicago Tribune. The Duofold was a rich Pompeian Brown with jet black trim. It had a heavy gold nib and bold pocket clip. This pen did not have a cap girdle. - New Ivorine pens were introduced in time for Christmas in shades of purple, green, mauve, taupe, transparent bakelite and black
1922	April	- The Duofold De Luxe and Duofold Junior De Luxe were introduced in Chinese Red with wide rolled gold or solid gold cap bands
	November	- The Duofold Junior and Lady Duofold were introduced The Parker Duette gold filled pen and pencil sets were introduced
1923		- The gold girdle reinforcement was added to the Duofold cap - Flashing Black was added as new colour for Duofold - The College pen was introduced in Black. It had the look of a Duofold, but was not marked such - The first Canadian marks appeared on Duofolds assembled in Toronto
1924	April	- Flashing Black was added to Duofold Junior and Lady Duofold
	April	- Duofold pencil was introduced with a small pocket clip and could be purchased singly or as Duette set with Duofold or Lady Duofold
	December	- Duofold "Big Bro." pencil was introduced as a mate for the Over-size Duofold pen
1925		- Duofold Junior Over-size pencil was introduced - Lady Duofold pencil was introduced

1926	Summer	- Nonbreakable Duofolds of Permanite were introduced. - Mottled green colour was added to pens and pencils
1926	May	- The Petite pastel pens and pencils were introduced. Pastel shades were magenta, mauve, Naples, blue, beige gray and coral. - Black vintage bands appeared on mottled green pencils - The non-clog pencil feed was introduced which could propel lead in or out - The Parker D.Q. school pen was introduced in black with a white gold cap girdle - The first Parker desk sets introduced. The sets featured a rotating ball-and-socket receptacle
1927	February	- Duofold imprint on pen barrel became smaller than in previous years - Parker Pastels introduced new pattern that was very similar to the Moire pattern
	01 April	- Announcement - that Parker makes no charge to service Duofold pens
	May	- Parker Pastels introduced and new Moire pattern of broken lines in five pastel shades: the green shade became apple green; pencils had the black vintage bands
	June	- New colours introduced included Lapis (mottled blue) and Chinese yellow
	September	- The new colours Lapis and Chinese yellow were called lapis lazuli blue and mandarin yellow respectively - Pressureless touch writing was announced
	December	- New colours for desk pens were announced, including jade, mandarin yellow, lacquer red, lapis lazuli blue and black with coloured Moire pattern tapers
1928		- Split cap girdles were introduced on Duofold - "Guaranteed forever against all defects" was introduced for all Duofolds - True Blue pens and pencils were introduced in Moderne blue-and-white design aimed at the low price market
	October	- The Imperial Duofold introduced in Moderne black and pearl, was described as silvery, beautifully tridescent. This pen was later called Duofold De Luxe

1929
- The entire line of Parker pens were redesigned and introduced in Streamline shapes.
- The pens were tapered at each end.
- The pencils' gold crowns were dispensed with and they were redesigned in the new streamline shape to match the pens
- The Convertible pens were introduced. A pocket cap with clip was included with every desk set pen. This combination made two pens of one - for pocket - for desk
- The Lucky Curve name was discontinued
- True Blue line of pens and pencils were discontinued
- Vest-Parker pens were introduced. These midget Duofolds were also convertible for desk sets.

1930
- Moderne green and pearl Duofolds were introduced

1931
- The black and burgundy red Duofolds were introduced
- Quink ink, a pen-cleaning ink formula was introduced in early summer

1932
- The Penparker was introduced in chromium and black finished metal. It was promoted as a desk base for Parker pens
- Sea green pearl and black Duofolds were introduced
- A line of Parker Duettes were introduced at economy prices in mahogany & white, grey & red and blue & black colours

Autumn
- A "Thrift-time Pocket-Desk Pen Travel Set" was introduced. The low-priced set included a $3 Parker pen, desk taper. The better set included a Duofold pocket pen. Some sets included matching pencils and Quink ink

1933 March
- The new Vacumatics were announced in the Saturday Evening Post. The Vacumatics were completely restyled. Features included 102% more ink capacity, new arrow pocket clip, cap and barrel made of laminated pearl and jet horizontal stripes, the nib was fashioned in platinum and gold and featured a reversible point, it was sacless and vacuum filled and their barrels were opaque.

- The Lifetime guarantee was discontinued with introduction of the new Vacumatics

September
- Visible ink supply was introduced for Vacumatics and the opaque models were discontinued.

1937 September - Speedline Vacumatics were introduced for the Major, Maxima and Senior models. Cap band was imprinted Parker

1939 - The Vacumatic Repeater pencil was introduced

1940 April - The Blue Diamond was introduced and signified "Guaranteed for Life"
- The Imperial Vacumatic pen and Writefine pencil was introduced in solid coloured barrels and gold-filled caps. The Blue Diamond appeared on the pens

1941 - The famous Parker "51" was introduced and was named after Parker's 51st Anniversary commemorating the year the pen came out of research in 1939
- The high Velocity "51" ink for "51" pens was introduced. It was designed to slow-down evaporation and step-up penetration to dry as you write

1947 - The "VS" pen was introduced. It was produced in black, blue, gray and rust barrel colours and had a "Lustraloy" cap with a straight pocket clip

1948 - Superchrome permanent ink was introduced in five colours.
- The Demi-Size "51" was introduced
- The "21" was introduced in a design similar to the "51" with a straight cap pocket clip. The "21" nib was made of Octanium.
- The Aero-Metric "51" was introduced with these new features: foto-fill filler, visible ink supply, pli-glass reservoir, ink flow governor, five layer insulation, hi-flite leak prevention, greater writing mileage, plathenium-tipped point, "Live Metal" clip and five other significant advances
- The new "51" Signet set was introduced in chased lined 12k gold-filled cap and barrel and lined with silver. The pen and pencil were available in regular and demi-size

1949 August - The Presidential "51" was introduced in solid gold. It had Sterling Silver inner parts

1950 - The "51" Flighter set was introduced in "Lustraloy" with a gold-filled arrow clip and cap girdle. The Aero-Metric ink system was featured in this pen
- The Parker "51" received the 1950 Fashion Academy Award for exceptional styling, precision and craftsmanship

1950	May	- The "51" Special was introduced with an Octanium nib. It was offered in four colours; red, black, grey and blue
	August	- The Parkette was introduced but was soon dropped from production because of lagging sales
	September	- The Flaminaire Butane Lighter was introduced, ran a short unsuccessful course and was discontinued
1954	January	- The Jotter ball point pen was released and featured an oversize ink cartridge. The Jotter was made entirely of stainless steel and nylon and offered a variety of point sizes. - Some Jotters were designed as matching companions for the "51" and "21" pens.
1955	January	- The Liquid Lead pencil was introduced and reached the market place in May. The pencil sold well for a while but was phased out in the early sixties
1956	September	- The Parker "61" Jet Flighter was released and featured a natural capillary filling system with no moving parts. The original model had a two-tone gold cap
1957		- The T-Ball Jotter was introduced and featured a textured tungsten carbide ball that prevented skipping
1959	September	- The Parker "61" Jet Flighter was released and featured a gold-filled cap, barrel and trim and was tested to 40,000 feet aloft
	December	- The Parker International Jotter ballpen was introduced with a gold-filled cap, barrel and clip and featured the T-Ball point
1960		- The Parker 45 was announced and featured an ink cartridge. It was named after the Western pistol
1962	June	- The VP (for very personal) was released and offered a contoured grip that could be dialled for best fit.
		- A Special Edition pen was fashioned from the Atlas booster rocket which made John Glenn the first American astronaut to orbit the earth on February 20th 1962. Only 250 of these pens were given to heads of state in foreign countries and a few VIPs here and abroad
1964	October	- The Parker 75 was announced and was made of solid sterling silver and trimmed in gold. It featured an adjustable dial grip

1965 November
- The Parker 75 Spanish Treasure Fleet was announced. It was fashioned from silver recovered from the Spanish Treasure Ship that sank in 1715. The pen's barrel was engraved with the words "Sterling Silver, Spanish Treasure Fleet, 1715". Only 4,821 pens were manufactured
- The Parker 75 Insignia was introduced in 14K gold-filled cap, barrel and trim
- The Parker 75 became available in Vermeil. It was made of 14K gold over sterling silver

1970 April
- The Parker T-1 was announced and was made almost entirely of titanium. Manufacturing the T-1 was no easy task because titanium is so tough. It was discontinued in 1971

1972
- The famed Parker Duofold was revived under the label of Big Red with the updated version utilizing interchangeable ball pen and soft tip writing modes. Millions are still being sold to those who nostalgically recalled the Roaring 20s - and those young enough to think Big Red was something new

1975
- The Systemark range was launched in the USA. The most popular model in the range was the Floating Ball Pen which used a liquid ink like a fountain pen; the range also featured interchangeable soft tip and plastic tip stylus refills. The range was phased out in 1983

1975/76
- The 61/65 convertible range was offered in a range of new gold finishes - cirrus, cumulus and stratus. These were phased out in March 1980 in the UK

1975
- The Lady Ball Pen was introduced in a white gold finish with fine engraving and a yellow gold finish. These versions were phased out in 1977

- The 25 Stainless Steel was launched in the UK as a pen, ballpen, pencil and subsequently as a fibre tip. This was a most successful initiative

1976
- The Slinger was introduced - a novelty ballpen designed to be worn around the neck. The following year it appeared in its 'Zodiac' form.

1977
- The Lady ballpen finishes were designed in white and yellow rolled gold and subsequently in a laque version. These were phased out in February 1983

1978
- The 25 was introduced in a black matte epoxy resin finish

1978		- The Falcon range was launched in stainless steel, TX., the nib was an integral part of the barrel of the pen
1979		- The 180 range
	September	- The gold 105 was launched in the UK to fill a market gap in the higher price range. The sharp increases in the price of gold torpedoed it. It was phased out in 1983. In May 1980 a less expensive version in stainless steel was introduced
1980	March	- The Harlequin range was introduced in the four writing modes. This was an attempt by the UK Company to feature etched designs on stainless steel as a selling point. It was at too high a price for the market to bear. It was phased out in February 1983.

Appendix VI

LAZLO MOHOLY-NAGY

Lazlo Moholy-Nagy was a seminal figure in the development of modern art and design in the first half of this century. In terms of design he was a man with a mission. Form should follow function. Ornamentation and decoration were superfluous and undemocratic; they represented old superstitions and an upper class taste for disguising utility. He insisted that the product had to be manufactured from the most appropriate materials that technology could offer. In art and sculpture he was constantly experimenting with new plastics and synthetics. Furthermore he was strongly opposed to the art and craft tradition of manufacture. He stipulated the most effective production processes consistent with the intended use of the product. As an artist he himself could sympathise with the craftsman whose skills were becoming outdated by the machine, but he felt that all factory workers could only gain in economic terms if all such wasteful processes were phased out. The man was as versatile as any Renaissance figure. He was determined, self-opinionated, deep thinking, articulate, argumentative and a born teacher. Kenneth Parker identified a genuine design gift of a high order when he retained him as an advisor in the early forties.

Moholy-Nagy was born in Bacsbarsod in the Hungarian countryside in July 1895. He began to read law at Budapest University but he soon became absorbed in painting and writing. He was called up in the Austro-Hungarian army in 1914 and was severely wounded on the Russian front three years later. He resumed his painting during his convalescence. On his discharge he returned to Budapest and took his degree but moved to Berlin in the early twenties. There he became a co-founder of constructivism, compiled an anthology of modern art and contributed to a number of advanced art magazines. His earliest reputation was based on his abstract paintings and non-representational photography.

In 1923 Walter Gropius invited him to join the staff of the Staatliche Bauhaus at Weimar - a pioneer art and architecture school which laid a special emphasis on design and workshop technology. Here he succeeded Paul Klee as head of the metal workshop and taught both the basic foundation course and photography. He also became interested in ballet and stage design and in the fields of layout and typography. In a recent study of the Bauhaus movement it has been said that "it was above all Moholy-Nagy's personal interpretation of constructivist attitudes that contributed to the emergence of a recognisable Bauhaus style" (of industrial design).

In 1928 the pressure of early fascism forced his resignation and he returned to Berlin to make a successful living as a stage designer and to develop the diverse range of his other interests. In particular he pursued his painting by experimenting with the use of new and unusual materials. He also consolidated his reputation as a typographical and layout designer. In 1934 rampant fascism persuaded him to leave Germany to settle in Amsterdam where a large printing company offered him facilities to experiment with colour film and photography.

The following year he moved to London under the sponsorship of Herbert Read. He lived among other refugees who had settled in Hampstead. Here he worked as a poster and layout designer for such clients as Imperial Airways and London Transport. He exhibited in numerous exhibitions, undertook book designs and contributed photographs to a number of specialist publications. He joined a group of artists, known as "the Circle", which included Barbara Hepworth, Myfanwy Evans and Henry Moore.

In 1937 there came an unexpected invitation to lead a new Bauhaus in Chicago, a project sponsored and funded by the Association of Arts and Industries. The venture collapsed in acrimony after a year because the money dried up. Moholy-Nagy, however, succeeded in salvaging the concept from the wreckage for in 1938 he founded his own School of Design in a disused bakery at 247 East Ontario Street, Chicago. Many of his former students rejoined him and the School was staffed by former colleagues, some of whom worked without pay. By 1939 he was acting as an adviser and designer for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad - for which he designed a new type of vista dome passenger carriage - and Speigel's Mail Order House - for whom he designed a range of hand tools.

"There is no task too small, and no project too big, to make it a manifesto of incorrupt design" had been his message to the young Dutchmen who crowded into his exhibition in Amsterdam in 1934. In 1944 Kenneth Parker appointed him as Art Adviser to the Parker Pen Company - and he was given the opportunity to prove his thesis. His widow subsequently wrote:

"It was a working relationship well suited to Moholy's disposition. Once a month he spent two days with the company in Janesville, listening to questions and problems ranging from the printing of an ink-bottle label to projects for a new factory building. His spontaneous fondness for people made him a patient and concentrated listener, and his lifelong experience as a teacher had taught him to formulate advice simply and slowly. The company had adapted the therapeutic technique of self-analysis to the technical field. Everyone was invited to discuss his work problems with Moholy, and it became evident that an hour of formulation was worth many weeks of solitary effort. When Moholy returned to Chicago he had absorbed the practical atmosphere in which his designs were to be realised. Together with his gifted collaborator, Nolan Rhoades, he worked on pens, clips, inkstands, packaging, posters, stationery and showrooms. These designs were as much part of his work as an artist as had been the B.& O. coach or the Gypsum exhibit. Through many years of experimentation Moholy had developed a 'sense' for plastics. He knew their properties, possibilities, and limitations. And from the days of the Bauhaus Metal Workshop he had retained a working knowledge of metals and alloys. He now combined transparent and solid materials, and light and heavy ones, to go into pens and accessories. Harmonious lines and the imaginative use of fine materials were the sole indicators of quality. The ostentatiously. rich ornamentation had been dropped. It was a first attempt to create a functional luxury trade".

Quoted in full below is an article on industrial design which he contributed to the Parker Shoptalker in June 1946. It lays down his basic premises and beliefs and comments shrewdly on the differing roles of the engineer and the designer and on the interface between them.

The Institute of Design that Moholy-Nagy founded and led developed strongly. It changed its location in Chicago three times and, by the time of his death from leukemia in November 1946, it had 680 students on the roll at its own complex at 632, North Dearborn Street. The following month Kenneth Parker wrote a brief obituary of Moholy-Nagy - 'Holy Mahogany' in the December Parkergram. This likewise is quoted in full.

Industrial Design - L. Moholy-Nagy

"Industrial design is a new profession. So far it has been more of an adventure than based upon exact knowledge of the requirements of industrial production, its technology, sales and distribution techniques. The successful industrial designers of this country have come from stage design, painting and architecture - people with imagination and fantasy within the new realms of esthetics based upon mass-production potentialities and who were not hampered by the tradition of the handicrafts. The older the craft, the more restraining influence it has upon the imagination of the designer. It is easier to design a new product which is based upon the new sciences and technologies than for example to re-design the ways and shapes of pottery, one of the oldest handicrafts of mankind. It is an old saying that "form follows function". This means that the shape of an object is defined by the work it has to do. After a million years of trials and error, nature has produced well-functioning shapes, but human history is much too short to be able to compete with nature's richness in creating functional forms. However, the ingenuity of man brought forth excellent results in every period of his history depending upon his science, technology, aesthetics and other requirements. This means that the simple statement, "form follows function", has to be complemented in the human sphere with another statement, that is, form also follows - or should follow - existing scientific technical and art development, including sociology and economy.

Economic considerations influence and direct design. For example, design in this country is essentially different from that of Europe. The economy in the United States is based upon frequent change of models and a quick turn-over, because by this method a country rich in resources, raw materials and human ingenuity can afford to be wasteful by declaring models obsolete long before their technical usefulness has ceased. In contrast to this, the European design, based mainly upon export, tries to produce long lasting goods and to conserve raw materials. In other words, the European export economy had to take the consumers' wishes into consideration because the money they paid out for imports represents a loss in the importing country's economy.

At present a great socio-economical change is taking place in this country - not true for Parker Pen - but true for other industries which must look for export markets in order to utilise their production potential and avoid unemployment. This will sooner or later require a revision of the idea of artificial obsolescence, ie the frequent replacement of merchandise by a new "design" before the previous one becomes technically obsolete. That revision is imperative if we desire to compete in the world markets.

Because these ideas are not familiar to the average public, "design" at present is mainly a weapon for sale, missing the inherent qualities of design, planned and organised function. So "design" is at present usually nothing but an exterior cloak around an engineered product and its main characteristic is to be "different" although the function remains the same. The industrial designer today is usually called in to "style" or "fashion" a product and the more often he changes the "design", the more he contributes to the salesman's paradise. It is natural that production and prosperity depend upon sale and that the salesman plays an important role, but his function will not be lessened and degraded if the designer learns to be an artist, planner and organiser who gives the products its organic function rather than its superficial "style". This means striving for "standard", that is the development of products toward their completeness in production, looks and use.

Under the pressure of the salesman, most of the designers succumbed to a superficial "style". This in the last ten years has been "streamlining" as it was previously ornamentation. But streamlining was originally invented for moving objects and there is no reason for an ash tray to be streamlined. However, certain elements of streamlining are exceedingly economic in production, especially since mass-production methods of stamping, pressing, casting and molding have been employed. They assist in easier production, assemblage and finishing.

We can say that our period is one of speed and motion which justifies "streamlining". But when it becomes only a mechanical application - we have to fight against it, as we did against the mechanical utilisation of symmetry with which everything in previous periods could be made "harmonious".

The "51" pen is one of the most successful designs of small utility objects in our period. It is light, handy, extremely well shaped, unobtrusive, and perfectly functional. Now that the cap is changed and simplified, I am only waiting for the acceptance of a more appropriate Parker arrow clip and then my delight will be complete.

When I first came to the Parker Pen Company, it was often thought that my duties were to style and fashion the products which the Research and Development Department considered as well engineered. Slowly, however, they yielded to my curiosity as to the mechanical functions of the product and they were willing to take suggestions if I could offer any for the improvement, not only of the appearance, but of its function. Naturally the designer's task is not to compete with the engineer, nor should the engineer indulge in the idea that he can do a perfect design, but their collaboration must be intimate. The designer has to know about the industrial processes and the basic mechanical principles involved in a certain problem and has to try to add to the specialist's findings his experience in the different fields from which sometimes useful analogies can be derived. This relationship is now established with the firm and I am very happy about it, especially as I often had experiences with firms where this notion of close collaboration was not acknowledged.

There is one more point which should be mentioned because there are so many mistaken ideas about design. In many firms everyone is called upon to judge the merits of a design irrespective of qualification for it. Many good designs have been eliminated from production or marketing because of the votes of personnel who had neither the knowledge nor the feeling about the merits of a design. Nothing is more important for the work of the designer than a customer with farsight, conviction, and the right "hunches" for future developments".

Obituary Note - Kenneth Parker

"One of the biggest losses this company has suffered in a long time was in the death of Moholy-Nagy on November 24, 1946. No matter how many designers we engage from now on, we shall not have the luck to find another like him. He was not only gifted as a designer but one of the truest friends this company ever had. His interest in our success and welfare was such you would have thought he was the sole owner of the business.

It is difficult for me to write about Moholy-Nagy because as a rule pieces written in the nature of obituaries are automatically full of high praise, no matter whether really deserved or not, and everybody knows it and discounts it accordingly. I could not over-praise Moholy-Nagy if I tried to.

Some months ago Moholy wrote a short article on Design for Shoptalker. I did not like it much but I did not tell him so. I think the reason I thought it somewhat flat was that it failed to convey at all what an extraordinarily valuable set of ideas Moholy continuously applied to our particular business. He had a natural feeling for the correctness of a line or a curve or shape or an embellishment or finish of a surface, a sense for all small things in combination that most of us lack. And that was really the lesser part of his value: he was always very far in the future in his thinking. He was a stimulating mentality if there ever was one.

Moholy-Nagy was born in Hungary. His first recognition as a designer, however, came in an invitation to join the faculty of the famed Bauhaus art and architectural school in Berlin. When the Nazis came into power, Moholy-Nagy and his associates moved to London. From there he went to America and he was one of the founders of the Bauhaus school of design in the old Marshall Field residence in Chicago.

In 1939 Moholy-Nagy opened the Institute of Design on North Dearborn Street, Chicago, which has grown in the span of seven years to be acknowledged as a leader in the realm of industrial design, architecture, photography and sculpture. And it was here that the resultful and personal association between this company and Moholy-Nagy began".

(Signed) Ken Parker

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"Parkergram": December 1946

Appendix VII

OUR CENTENARY

In October 1926 the American magazine "System - the Magazine of Business" carried an article by George S Parker. He looked back over 38 years of inventing, developing, making and selling fountain pens and shared the lessons that he had learned with his readers. Much of our knowledge of the early history of the Company stems from this article.

The year of our centenary celebrates George Parker's first innovative steps to develop a fountain pen that actually worked. It is a fitting tribute to the man to reproduce the article in full. These are George Parker's own words:

"A few years ago, a friend with whom I was talking over some of the improvement work we are constantly doing on our pens and pencils said: "There's a chap making dental machinery down in New England who could be a help to you on this work".

Partly because he was not a pen-and-pencil man, I went down to see him, and hired him. When he came out to Janesville to work, he said to me: "As you know, I know almost nothing about the fountain pen business. If you don't mind, I'd rather not be told anything, for the present. It will be better, I think, if I do not know too much about how things have been done. Just let me take one of the pens and think about it, and see how it seems to me they ought to be done".

The pen point, as the business end of the pen, was the first thing he studied, and he immediately discovered a practice there that struck him as strange. As with all other pens of that time, the two sides of the point of our pen were braced together at the tip. It had been assumed from time immemorial in the pen business that the bracing was necessary to make the point strong. No one experienced in the pen business would have thought of questioning the practice; no one had questioned it in many years, at any rate. But the dental machinery man, with his mind fresh toward our work, immediately thought of it as odd.

He noticed that the two sides of the pen were strong enough to stand on their own, without this pressing together. He thought the ink might flow down between them better if they were not so pressed.

And he made up a pen in this novel style to find out.

This fountain pen was the first ever made in our factory, and the first ever made anywhere, so far as I know, that was sure to write the moment it was set to paper.

We adopted the new style of point, and it has been a large factor in our sales ever since. I have recently been around the world, and I have found people everywhere giving this as a reason for having purchased our pen.

One of the easiest assumptions for all of us, I suspect - all managers, I mean - is that the best guidance in running our business is what already has been done in it, our own concern or in others in our line.

I am certainly not saying that we have profited by ignoring what has worked well for us in the past, or what has worked well for our competitors. But I am quite frank in saying that our best gains have come from departures from both.

What is it, really, that has enabled us to go forward? We have made some money every year since the beginning, 34 years ago; and every year, good and bad, we have done more business than in the year before. What was it accomplished this? Not good pens alone, or more energy and intelligence on the part of the sales force. Other concerns with high standards in both have fallen by the wayside long since.

The essential thing, beyond either of these, has been a responsiveness of new demands, regardless of whether it was in accord with the traditions of the business. That has saved us and helped us repeatedly. We have contrived to follow the turn in the road, when we might easily have gone off the cliff.

My first experience in the pen business was a lesson in doing just this. I was teaching in a school of telegraphy here in Janesville, and I was selling fountain pens to the students for one of the old-time manufacturers, now out of business. The idea of a fountain pen was popular with the students, but the pens themselves were continually giving dissatisfaction, and the principal trouble was that there was no provision in them for a steady flow of air up into the ink chamber as the ink flowed out. The pens alternated between no flow of ink at all, when the air was trying to force its way up there, and too abundant a flow when it had forced its way up in a lump, so to speak.

So far as the manufacturer was concerned, this evidently was regarded as a normal difficulty. But to me, forced to live with the students I had sold the pens to, it was a very great difficulty indeed. Other manufacturers had worked on the problem before that time, but what they had done was unknown to me. But as the students brought their pens to me, to see what could be done, I saw the need of a new sort of feed-shaft. I got a scroll saw, a file, and some other simple equipment, and tinkered until I had made up a shaft that would let the air up more steadily. I put these shafts into the pens of the manufacturer I was working for, solely to give satisfaction to the people I had sold.

But when I had improved the pens in this way, it occurred to me that I might as well be selling pens of my own. I bought a supply of hard rubber tube, planned some new parts with the help of a local jeweller, ordered other parts from manufacturing jobbers - all for just the few dollars that I could spare - and in my bedroom in the small hotel where I was living, and while I was still a "professor" in the school of telegraphy, began assembling my own pens.

That was the beginning of the Parker pen.

And you see how it represented a departure from the prevailing practices of the pen business, so far as I knew them - a departure which was governed solely by the demand I had seen.

Whenever there has been anything like a crisis in our business, we have usually been able to see that we needed only to do that same sort of thing. There came a time, for instance, when the public clearly wanted the feed-shaft on the under-side of the pen, instead of on the upper side, where it always had been. Some-one had put out a pen with the feed-shaft underneath, and it "took".

There was a good deal of discussion among the pen makers as to whether the under-feed pens really were better; and I suppose it is still a debatable question. But that was not the point. The public had shown it wanted the under-feed pens, and was satisfied with their service.

More than one manufacturer went out of business on the issue; and although we were not first to adopt the under-feed plan, the fact that we were quick to adopt it, once the demand had appeared, clearly sent us forward when we might have gone back.

We have had that sort of experience again and again.

But if we had always waited for new demands to be demonstrated by someone else before we did anything about them, we should have missed the best advances we have made.

I have thought many times of our experience with Billy Collins, our first full-time salesman. Always before Billy, we had sold only through salesmen who carried our pens as a sideline, and through occasional trips of our headquarters staff.

But Billy ranged over the country, giving his full-time to us and selling what seemed a great quantity of pens. He sold them in every section of this country, and when he had exhausted the opportunities here, as he thought, he went over to Cuba and sold a lot there.

From Cuba, he came back to Janesville, and said he was going to work in the factory awhile. The market, he said, was saturated!

Well, if our own experience, or the experience of any other manufacturer that we knew about at the time was a guide, Billy was right. He had sold more pens in a year than we had ever hoped to sell in that time. But presently, simply by following our common sense - common sense that told us there was far more need of fountain pens in the country than any one had yet demonstrated - we were led to send Billy back on the road, and another salesman besides - and to double our sales in a year!

We have had similar experiences with dull years. The evidence in those years, if we took only the evidence that was offered us on a platter, was all for reduced opportunities. But, by the simple expedient of putting more pressure back of our selling - adding a salesman or two, doing more of better advertising, or something of the kind - we have been able to uncover more of that latent and undemonstrated demand, and so make our increases these years, as well as the others.

One of our most interesting and profitable experiences in meeting a new demand has been with the Duofold pens. The demand - a demand for a brighter, better, and more expensive pen was latent. Nobody had worked it out. Nobody could say positively it was there, or had thought much about it. We had to pioneer in uncovering our market.

How did we first get a hint of the demand? It came first from one of our district managers, and was at first completely rejected. It came from him again, and was again rejected - so unresponsive is it possible to be to even the best ideas. But because he was a good salesman, and had a clear vision and a consequent firm conviction, he raised the question again; he did not write this time, he came into headquarters with the idea.

I shall not soon forget the interview here in my office, in which we decided for the pen. It was in the spring of 1921 - that trying year! - and the district manager was proposing a pen that was to sell for more than twice what the ordinary fountain pen had been sold for.

The argument about its being a bad time was obvious. And he was ready for it.

"Look at the cars going up and down this hill," he said. And we looked awhile, out on the drive running up by the Rock County courthouse. "They're not the cheapest cars, many of them, you see," he said, "and many of them are new. People have been buying these expensive cars this year. For all we hear about hard times, they've had the money. Do you think they could not afford to pay, that they would not be glad to pay, $7 for a fountain pen that they could be proud to own and use?".

The whole Duofold business hung in the balance for a moment. And then we decided to try out the idea. The first of the pens made up - just a handful, really, made up for a test - were sent to the branch manager who had suggested them, and he sold them. He sold some more that followed. Other branch managers and salesmen, also sold the few that were sent them; but still others, the majority of our sales force, reported resistance from the trade. The retailers, they said, were afraid of a pen that sold for so much more than people were used to paying.

We had at least a glimmer of evidence that we were at work on a good idea, but there were still two steps before us, before we could be sure; first, to prove by investigation, as well as we could, that the idea was right, and then, if it appeared that it was right, to go forward with actual selling effort in the field by properly conservative stages.

For it is clear that the policy of ready response to new demands is worse than useless, it is pretty nearly sure to be disastrous in the long run, unless it proceeds with the greatest care in testing the new demand.

To get a better indication of the demand for the new pens, we sent investigators into three different states. Each of these men was equipped with 10 or 12 fountain pens, varying in size and style but all black except the three Duofolds. The investigators had been carefully instructed, so that their reports would represent the true opinion of the people they talked to. That, of course, is the first consideration in an investigation of this kind. They went to small towns and large, talked to people in their homes, on the streets, wherever they could find them, and to all classes of people. Displaying his tray of pens, each investigator said:

"Will you pardon me, please, if I ask you a question? I am not selling pens, I am merely finding out what kind people like. It will help me a great deal to have your opinion. Would you try these pens, and see which one suits you best?"

They recorded each interview, and the returns made up at last showed the following:

1. Percentage of men and percentage of women favouring the following:

   A. Oversize; percentage favouring red, percentage favouring black
   B. Duofold, Junior; percentage favouring red, percentage favouring black
   C. Lady Duofold; percentage favouring red, percentage favouring black
   D. Regular black pens at various prices

2. Percentage of people favouring Oversize Duofold but objecting to price; same information on other two Duofolds

3. Extent to which people expressed admiration for Duofolds

   A. Colour
   B. Point
   C. Size

4. Comments favourable and unfavourable on various makes and styles of pens

The investigation showed an extensive demand for the Duofolds, in comparison with all other pens; and, together with the indications that had been coming in from our sales force, it convinced us that we should go ahead with a more direct and thorough going test - the test of an actual advertising and selling campaign. We chose Chicago for this campaign, because, like New York, it is not an easy market. To make a success in Chicago in an "off season" as March and April were then generally regarded in the fountain pen business, meant that the campaign should be successful almost anywhere in the country.

This campaign was to be of about 12 weeks' duration. One newspaper was selected for the test. More papers would have been better, and have since been added. But for the test, it was considered desirable to restrict the expenditure as much as possible without defeating the purpose.

The schedule of advertising to be run consisted of 15 insertions:

One 800-line advertisement first week
Two 360-line advertisements each week for three weeks

I quote from a report prepared soon after the campaign on what followed:

"On a Saturday, nine days preceding the publication of the first advertisement, ten Parker salesmen, having left their territories, reported in Chicago. The day was spent in holding a 'sales school', in which the sales crew was instructed in the presentation of the proposition to the retailers.

Each salesman was supplied with:

A Sample Duofold pens

B Portfolio containing

1 Letter from the newspaper to be used certifying to the receipt of a non-cancellable order for the advertising

2. Proofs of the advertisement

3. Reproductions of posters - of which 156 were to be posted throughout the city, to show the black-tipped, lacquer-red colour of the Duofold, which could not be shown in the newspaper

4. Reproduction of counter cards and window display cards, which the advertiser would supply free

5. Testimonial letters from dealers in other towns who had handled the pens with large success

6. A set of instructions for salesmen

7. A map of Chicago with all trading centres numbered

8. A set of cards, each bearing the name and address of a stationery, drug, department, or jewellery store, and a number corresponding to the number of trading centre on the map where the store was located. On the back of each card was the rating of each dealer.

Salesmen were assigned certain trading centres and given the dealer cards for the centre, arranged in a 'call route'.

The salesmen started out at 8.30 a.m. the following Monday and worked one week. They were then sent back to their regular territories and two men left to make follow-up calls on dealers who had not bought. (The gross sales of pens in the first week exceeded the gross cost of the three months' advertising scheduled for Chicago).

The first advertisement appeared the Monday following the sales drive. This contained the names of the Chicago stores which had stocked Duofolds. The insertion of the store name in this advertisement was one of the inducements which the salesmen had made to the dealers.

Window displays were obtained in a large number of stores, through salesmen and a special window-trimming agency. The displays established contact with the public at the place of sale, and this while the advertising was in progress.

Originally it was planned to test the campaign for three months in Chicago, and, if the campaign was successful, to make such modifications as might seen advisable and repeat the success in other cities. But by the time the fifth advertisement had appeared, the pens were moving to such an extent in Chicago that we decided to lose no time in covering other large cities in the same way.

Eastern salesmen were called into New York City, and handled as the others had been in Chicago. The Chicago plan was followed also in about 14 other major cities. During the summer, campaigns, modified according to the size of the city, were put on in other cities throughout the country.

Meantime our salesmen had been selling in smaller towns where they had found good demand developing because of the country circulation of the metropolitan newspapers. Thus by August, we had sufficiently strong representation in large and small cities throughout the country to begin our national advertising, which has steadily grown ever since.

The year 1922 - the year of these first campaigns - closed with a 77% gain in our sales over 1921, notwithstanding that the first three months (prior to the Duofold advertising) had registered a loss.

The success of the Duofolds, incidentally, made it practical for us to simplify our line; and this was one of the best things it did. Like many manufacturers, we had added style after style, rather lightly, for service and for other reasons, until we had a great many styles. We were making more than 400 styles of pens four years ago.

It had been difficult to drop any ot them, so long as no one group was predominant. All of them were necessary, as far as we knew, to maintain our sales. But with the Duofolds going so well, and making their heavy demands on our factory capacity, we were able to cut our old styles without apprehension. We have reduced them gradually, and certainly without damaging the business, until we now have less than 30 styles altogether.

What that had meant in the factory will be obvious to factory men. But it has meant quite as much to the sales force. They have been able to go to dealers with a complete line, and yet a line in which every item was a fast mover. The dealer, that is to say, could order a stock of all fast movers almost with his eyes closed - a thing that he could scarcely do under any conditions before.

With the line thus simplified, we were able to work out simple, yet complete, merchandising plans for retailers - plans based on the experience of successful retailers and that we knew would work; so that our salesmen when properly trained - and we saw to it that they were so trained very early in the game - were able to go to dealers with not only pens to sell but a whole merchandising plan that had made money for other merchants similarly situated.

This is how, under quite modern conditions, we have adjusted ourselves to a new demand, and made gains in our volume and profits in each of the last three years that were considerably the largest in our history.

The easiest time to become set in one's ways is, of course, in the midst of some substantial accomplishments, or on the heels of it. We could have gone on very comfortably with only the Duofolds and the few other pens and pencils that we carried; and indeed the temptation to do that was unusually great, because of the persistent growth in the Duofold business.

But we have reason to be glad that we did not - that we still did not close our minds to changing demands and fresh opportunities.

Another branch manager came to me some months ago, much as the one I have already told of had come, with the idea of a super pencil - if I may use the expression. A pencil to correspond to the oversize pen. If people were willing to pay for a pen they could take a pride in, he said, why would they not do as much for a pencil?

It would have been easy, as I say, to turn our backs on the idea, especially in view of the attention the pens were requiring. And that was what we were inclined for a little while to do. But we put out a few of the pencils. We tested along in various ways, as we had with the pen. And one of our biggest sellers now is that pencil.

Appendix VIII

THE MECHANICS OF SURRENDER: I

EUROPE

By the end of April 1945 all concerted German defence had disintegrated. On 25 April the Americans had linked up with the Russians at Torgau on the Elbe. The Russians had reached Berlin and were fighting their way through the city, house by house and street by street. On Monday 30 April, Hitler committed suicide with Eva Braun in the Fuhrerbunker. He named Admiral Donitz, the Commander-in-Chief of the German Navy, as his successor. On 2 May all effective resistance petered out in Berlin; Hamburg fell to the British and over one million German troops capitulated in Italy. The war was clearly and irretrievably lost.

Prologue:

Donitz had only one objective: to save as many Germans as possible from the Russians who were wrecking a terrible vengeance on the civilian population. He was desperate to postpone total surrender for as long as possible to win time for both civilians and the armed forces to escape from the Russian zone. To achieve this he needed the co-operation of the western allies. The nearest command headquarters was that of General Montgomery, who commanded the 21st Army Group and was managing the northern battles from three battered caravans parked on Luneberg Heath, a few miles to the south east of Hamburg.

On 3 May a four-man delegation of high ranking German officers made their way to Luneberg to offer a limited surrender confined to the armies of the north. It was led by Admiral von Friedeburg, who had succeeded Donitz as Commander-in-Chief of the German Navy. General Kinzel represented the army and the Luftwaffe and Rear Admiral Wagner spoke for the navy. One of Hitler's personal aides - a Major Friedel - completed their number. They were described as "sitting wax-faced, tense and bolt upright in their cars, the German envoys presented a perfect caricature of the Junker officer on parade. Monocles, thin tight contemptuous lips, jack boots, long grey belted coats, a general atmosphere of pent up defiance".

Montgomery was at his most regimental. "Who are these men?" His interpreter told him. "What do they want?" Their offer to surrender the three German armies facing the Russians from Berlin to Rostock was tersely refused. These armies must surrender to the Russians. Von Friedeburg said that it was unthinkable to surrender to the Russians. The Russians were savages and German soldiers would be sent to work in Russia. Montgomery replied that the Germans should have thought of this before they attacked Russia in June 1941. The only surrender that he would accept was the capitulation of all German forces in Holland, Friesland, Heligoland, Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark. The German delegation left to obtain further instructions.

On the following day, Friday 4 May, the delegation returned. Alan Moorehead witnessed Montgomery's triumph:

"Friedeburg, cigarette in hand, slowly led his delegation across the heath to Montomery's caravan, where he saluted, mounted the steps and went inside.

There followed some discussion as to whether Dunkirk and the Channel Islands might have been included in the surrender, but the subject was dropped as this would have caused delay. The four other envoys, tight-waisted, rigid and silent, stood nervously in a semi-circle at the steps of the caravan. Inside, Friedeburg had asked for a German copy of the terms, but he scarcely glanced at them.

Presently he came out, nodded to the others and muttered something as if to say, "It's just as we thought", and the five men walked slowly past us to the conference tent. Its sides had been rolled up, and six chairs had been placed at a trestle table covered with a plain army blanket. The Germans took their place at the table. Never had I seen Montgomery more sure of himself than at this moment. As he came past us he murmured pleasantly, "This is a great moment", and he proceeded calmly to the tent, the terms of the surrender in his hand. He conducted the proceedings rather like a schoolmaster taking an oral examination. As he went into the tent the Germans rose and saluted. Then sitting at the head of the table, spectacles on nose, Montgomery read the terms slowly, precisely and deliberately in English. The Germans, who hardly spoke a syllable of English, sat there without a word, for the most part staring vacantly at the grey army blanket. Camera lights flicked on and off. The reading took a full three minutes.

At the end, Montgomery picked up an unpainted post-office pen, dipped it in the ink-pot and said: "You will now sign the document. First General-Admiral Friedeburg", and he handed the pen across. "Next General Kinzel". Each man leaned over Montgomery's chair to make his signature. "Next Rear-Admiral Wagner. Next Colonel Poleck" (who represented Keitel, the new commander in chief of the Wehrmacht". "And last Major Friedel" (Montgomery mispronounced it "Freidel"). Finally: "I will now sign for General Eisenhower, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces", and the Field-Marshal added his signature with the same pen".

The single pen was described by Montgomery as "an ordinary army pen that you could buy in a shop for twopence"; Alan Moorhead called it "an unpainted post office pen". Immediately after the surrender somebody nicked it .....

Both von Friedeburg and Kinzel committed suicide within three weeks of the capitulation. The ambitious Major Friedel was killed in a car crash. Only Rear Admiral Wagner survived to take a high level post in the West German Ministry of Defence.

The main action

General Eisenhower commanded all the forces of the western allies from his forward head-quarters which was established in the Ecole Industrielle - an undistinguished red brick building - at Rheims. Following the news of the surrenders in Italy, Berlin and Luneberg, there was an air of expectation that the war in effect was over, combined with frustration at the difficulties of putting the mechanisms in place. The German delegation, still led by the hapless von Friedeburg, were diverted to Brussels because of bad weather and had to make the rest of the journey by car. They eventually arrived at 5.00 pm on the evening of Saturday 5 May.

Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, chaired the first meeting - but immediately ran into an anti-climax. The corpse still twitched. Von Friedeburg was authorised only to parley and not to surrender - and had no ready means of communication with Donitz. He spoke feelingly of the sufferings of the German civilian population but received as tough a reply from Bedell Smith as that he had already got from the British. Nothing could be achieved until von Friedeburg could contact Donitz. Saturday dragged into Sunday and Sunday passed in deadlock.

Eisenhower's naval aide, Captain Harry Butcher, was then entrusted with a new appointment, hitherto unknown in any military structure. He was appointed 'Superintendent of the Fountain Pens'. There were two such pens, one gold and the other gold plated, given to Eisenhower by a friend especially for use in the ceremony. Both pens were Parkers. The friend was almost certainly Kenneth Parker.

The deadlock was broken by the arrival of General Jodl, the German Chief of Staff, at 6.00 pm. The negotiations dragged on. Eisenhower held the line and would accept nothing less than total surrender. The Germans used every argument to play for time. Eventually Eisenhower instructed his senior British Staff Officer, General Strong, to issue an ultimatum: the allies would close their lines in 48 hours so that no more Germans could escape to the west, but the capitulation must be signed forthwith. This at least offered a breathing space and Donitz gave his permission to surrender on these terms. It was now 1.30 am.

Captain Butcher, as custodian of the pens, was summoned by Bedell Smith's secretary. He had to hurry to be in time for the ceremony itself. Bedell Smith presided: Eisenhower himself remained aloof from the German delegation as he had done throughout. Captain Butcher described the scene:

"General Strong placed the documents for signature in front of General Smith, before whom I laid the solid-gold fountain pen. Beetle spoke briefly to the Germans, which was interpreted for them by Strong. It was merely that the surrender documents awaited signature. Were they ready and prepared to sign? Jodl indicated assent with a slight nod... Generals Smith, Susloparov and Sevez (for France) then signed both documents. At the conclusion of the signing, General Jodl stood at attention, addressed General Smith, and said, in English: "I want to say a word". Then he lapsed into German, later interpreted as: "General! With this signature the German people and German armed forces are for better or worse delivered into the victor's hands. In this hour I can only express the hope that the victor will treat them with generosity".

After the signing the Germans were summoned upstairs to meet Eisenhower for the first time:

"After the necessary papers had been signed...Field Marshal Jodl was brought to my office. I asked him through the interpreter if he thoroughly understood all the provisions of the document he had signed. He answered "Ja".

I said: "You will, officially and personally, be held responsible if the terms of this surrender are violated, including its provisions for German commanders to appear in Berlin at the moment set by the Russian High Command to accomplish formal surrender to that government. That is all". He saluted and left.

Eisenhower had some residual duties to perform. He posed for photographers and held up the famous Parkers in a 'V for Victory'. He had to record a brief statement for the radio and the newsreels. (This involved a retake since he alluded to the event as an 'armistice'; Captain Butcher had to point out that it was 'complete and unconditional surrender'!) Then there was some cheerful discussion about the terms of his signal to the combined Chiefs of Staff. Ultimately he went for simplicity:

"The mission of this allied force was fulfilled at 02.41 local time, May 7, 1945"

THE MECHANICS OF SURRENDER: II

JAPAN

One of the more unlikely participants in the Gulf War was the U.S.S.Battleship Missouri. With a displacement of 45,000 tons she had been launched in January 1944, too late for significant action in World War II though she had played some part in the Korean War. Since 1955 she had been mothballed, moored off Puget Sound, Washington State, where she had proved a popular tourist attraction. On 2nd September 1945, however, she lay at anchor in Tokyo Bay, surrounded by an armada of ships from the American Pacific fleets. She was to be the setting of Japan's formal surrender. The flag flying from the mainstaff was that which had flown over the Capital on 7th December 1941 - the day of Pearl Harbour. It was a Sunday morning, cloudy and overcast.

At 0805 Admiral Chester Nimitz came on board. Forty minutes later General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Allied Commander, arrived from the destroyer Nicholas. At 0856 the destroyer Lansdowne delivered the Japanese delegation. The Foreign Minister, Mamouru Shigemitsu, was suffering intense pain from a badly fitted artificial leg; the Chief of the Army General Staff, Yoshisiro Umeza, led nine other delegates from the armed services and the Japanese Foreign Office. The civilians were in formal morning dress; the military in 'ill-fitting' uniforms. The crew of the Missouri took advantage of every possible vantage point that the ship afforded.

The proceedings were brusque. The party gathered round an old mess table, covered in green baize from the Ward Room, which had been erected in an open area under No.2 turret. On the table were placed the surrender documents and a fountain pen stand. The Japanese delegation was told where to stand and remained rigid while the Ship's Chaplain said a prayer and the tannoy emitted a rendering of 'The Star Spangled Banner'. The Allied signatories then came up from the Ward Room.

General MacArthur summoned the Japanese to sign the document. Foreign Minister Shigemitsu came first but fumbled awkwardly with his hat, gloves and stock, "Sutherland, show him where to sign" ordered MacArthur. General Sutherland indicated the proper place and Shigemitsu signed. Technically World War II ended at 0904. The rest followed. MacArthur then signed for the United Nations. Behind him in the place of honour stood General Jonathan Wainwright who, in the spring of 1942, had commanded the forlorn defence of the island fortress of Corregidor, and the British General Arthur Percival whose defence of Singapore was less than distinguished. Both men were prematurely aged as a result of their harsh treatment as prisoners of war. Admiral Nimitz signed for the United States. Admiral Sir Bruce Frazer signed for the United Kingdom followed by representatives from China, Russia, Australia, Canada, France, Netherlands and New Zealand. By 0918 it was all over. The Japanese contingent bowed stiffly and left the Missouri as they had come. At that point the clouds parted and the sun shone through. Some two thousand American aircraft flew overhead in tight formation.

It would seem that MacArthur used five - or some say six - pens with which to sign the surrender documents. He handed the first one - a boxed Parker Pen and Pencil set: Serial number 2246 - to his old friend General Wainwright. They had served together in the Philippines before the war.

The second silver plated pen went to General Percival. General Willoughby received one on behalf of the West Point Military Academy. One was reserved to the U.S.S.Missouri itself. One may have been given to President Truman. The last pen that he used was not given away. It was a twenty year old red Parker Duofold that belonged to his wife Jean.

One can sympathise with Jean MacArthur's wish that her pen should feature in the surrender ceremony. At the outbreak of war General MacArthur was in command of American forces in the Philippines. He and his family were trapped in Corregidor when the Japanese invaded in overwhelming force early in 1942. On 11th March they had to make a hasty escape. The General, his wife Jean, his son Arthur and his Amah Aal Chon together with his Aide, Colonel Sidney Huff, bundled aboard a small patrol torpedo boat in an attempt to make Port Darwin, Australia.

The day after the surrender ritual, General Wainwright flew to the Philippines to accept the formal surrender of his erstwhile victors. (Their commander, General Yamashita - The Tiger - had meekly promised not to commit hara-kiri). He subsequently gave his Parker to the same Colonel Huff. He in turn passed it to a close friend, Squadron-Leader Patrick MacArthur of the Royal Australian Air Force. He had been seconded to allied intelligence during the war. On his death in 1989, he left it to Basil Collins, Manager of the Queensland Newspaper Group, who had likewise served in the R.A.A.F. and who was a keen historian of World War II.

Admiral Nimitz, the overall Naval Commander, signed with a Parker 51. This pen had been given to him by a close personal friend, Y.C.Woo, the resident Executive Director at San Francisco of the Bank of Canton. When the Admiral left for Hawaii soon after Pearl Harbour, Woo had presented it as a parting gift: "When you have defeated Japan you can sign the peace treaty with it". Four years later Nimitz handed it back. "This is the pen you presented to me at Berkley...'With best wishes and a speedy victory', your wishes for a speedy victory have been fulfilled....."

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EPILOGUE

MacArthur insisted that he must take the Japanese surrender in Tokyo before surrenders could be accepted in outlying territories. It was therefore ten days later, on Wednesday 12 September 1945, that Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in South East Asia, presided over the Japanese surrender in Singapore. MacArthur thought that the surrender of swords was an archaic practice, likely to lead to loss of face; Mountbatten's view was that this was an admirable reason for doing it. In his command all senior Japanese officers were required to hand over their swords in formal ceremony in front of their men. They did not receive them back. By this time the conditions inflicted on allied prisoners of war were being exposed and publicised: both military and public opinion had hardened.

The event was stage managed with an almost theatrical flair. Four hundred distinguished spectators watched in the Main Hall of Singapore's Municipal Buildings and a further one hundred and forty pressmen filled the galleries. The Japanese delegation consisted of three army commanders, the air commander and two admirals. Field Marshal Terauchi, the overall Supremo was bed-ridden, having suffered a stroke - a fact that Mountbatten had had somewhat brutally confirmed by his own doctor in person. The spectators were ordered to remain seated when the Japanese entered the hall. In his opening speech Mountbatten stressed that this was no negotiated surrender - it was the outward and visible sign of a complete military defeat.

The actual ceremony was formal and precise. The Japanese credentials were read out aloud slowly; the Instrument of Surrender somewhat more hurriedly. Eleven copies of the Instrument of Surrender were signed - one for each of the seven allies plus the Japanese and one each for S.E.A.C. records, for George VI and for Mountbatten himself. Eleven separate pens were used which Mountbatten subsequently gave to his Commanders-in-Chiefs and the three services colleges. "In doing this I was following the precedent set by Eisenhower and MacArthur". He kept one for himself together with the one the Japanese officers had used. After the signing Mountbatten ordered the Japanese to withdraw. "I have never seen six more villainous, depraved or brutal faces in my life", he confided to his diary, "I shudder to think what it would have been like to be in their power. When they got off their chairs and shambled out, they looked like a bunch of gorillas with great baggy breeches and knuckles almost trailing to the ground. The two admirals were dressed in khaki like the five generals, and the only way you could tell the difference was that the generals wore spurs".

The pens themselves? Ordinary dip pens of no intrinsic value. One is exhibited in the Imperial War Museum and another at Broadlands.

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